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THE
WISDOM OF THE KING;

OR,

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES.

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS Volume is the result of certain preparations made for an evening Lecture to the Author's congregation. This fact will account, and perhaps apologize, for the various moods observable in the several chapters, and the hortatory style sometimes adopted. Having been published in successive numbers of a local paper, they are now reissued, with slight corrections, in a more permanent form, at the request of many who heard them delivered, or read them in the columns of *The Presbyterian Advocate*. The Author is fully sensible of the many defects in these pages, which he yet hopes may be found to contain some true and useful views, not altogether common, and needing exposition.

The distance of the Author from the press preventing him from reading proof, will account for minor errors and inaccuracies.

SAINT JOHN, November 1870.

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THE WISDOM OF THE KING.



I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE BOOK.

THE Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the few literary pictures yet hanging on the walls of early time. The laws of Moses, the wars of Joshua, the histories of Samuel, the psalms of David, the trials of Job, and some others, have a yet more antique appearance. The first authors in the world were Jews. No other nation has sent down to us a literature so old. The first period of Jewish letters was past ere Solomon's day. Yet the blind bard of Greece was not born when this King of Israel sung of the Messiah's love for His Church; Lycurgus had not instituted his laws when Solomon sat on the judgment-seat; and Solon had yet to wait centuries to be born after the Preacher had delivered his discourses on wisdom. We do not

possess the first literary efforts of either the Jew or the Greek. There is a finish about the style of their earliest writings which forbids the thought that they contain the first attempts of national authorship. Moses had his precursors, and is indebted to previous historians for many of his facts. The writers of the wars of Joshua and of the second volume of Samuel refer to the 'Book of Jasher' as authority for some of their statements. Even the author of the Book of Numbers refers to a previous history—'The Book of the Wars of the Lord.' The manuscripts of most ancient date have fallen a prey to the devourer, which eats up columns of granite and stable empires as well as feeble books. While war desolates everything, parchments also fear the worm. Only wonderful care could have preserved any of this frail generation for so many centuries. When we think how many, in the present day, of the great family of books die leaving scarcely a name, we shall have the higher respect for those old-world worthies whose innate vitality has enabled them to survive the ruins of empires.

It is principally from books that we become acquainted with the men of ancient days. There are indeed works which industry has reared and art embellished, whose remains we yet behold. The pyramids, the sepulchres of the dead, the broken

pillars of temples, the treasures of art dug from ruined palaces, the coins of ancient commerce, the medals struck in commemoration of victories, the statues and bas-reliefs indicative of the objects of worship or portraying historic personages,—these are useful in constructing the ideal edifice of past society; and yet without contemporaneous literature all these would be of little avail in producing an adequate picture of the bygone ages. From Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel, we know more of Babylon, Tyre, and Jerusalem than excavators or travellers will ever unfold. Even the treasures of art from the ruined palaces of Nineveh fail to do more than illustrate as a commentary the things written of that ancient city by the old Hebrew prophets.

There are certain things of which no knowledge can be handed down to us save through the medium of the book. The thinkings of men can become the heritage of the future generations alone through literature. What Solomon did might be partly perpetuated by the works themselves; but Solomon's opinions regarding what he did, and the motives of his actions, can alone be understood through language—for a time by tradition, afterwards by writing. This book, whether from the King's own pen, or that of some other author after his time, displays without doubt the workings of Solomon's mind, the

feelings by which he was actuated, and the conclusions at which he arrived.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.

Modern criticism affirms that Solomon is not the author of this book—at least as it now stands. De Wette, Keil, Bleek, and others refer its composition to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. The principal reasons for setting aside the authorship of Solomon are—the use of foreign words, more appropriate to the period of the captivity; the absence of any protest against, or even reference to, idolatry, which was still rife in Solomon's time; and the generally scornful and sceptical sentiments of the book, evidencing a later product of thought. It has been replied, that Solomon's intercourse with foreign nations, by commerce and marriage, accounts satisfactorily for the presence of foreign words and idioms; that his own lapse into idolatry might seal his lips against its condemnation, and prevent even a remote reference to it; while his intensely active mind and wild sensual life would produce just such thoughts, though not yet common to the age. The author, also, claims to be the King of Israel, speaks generally in the first person, and delivers sentiments in harmony with what we otherwise know of his life. Though there are great difficulties in acknowledging

Solomon as the author, we may still, in accordance with ancient Jewish and Christian usage, speak of him as the writer. We would not despoil the great monarch of a crown which we can place only on some vague, imaginary brow. It fits no head so well as that of the wise Solomon.

THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK.

To teach the unsatisfactoriness of wisdom, pleasure, and art—the propriety of a moderate use of the enjoyments of life—a humble submission to the arrangements of Providence, and fervent piety, was the object of this treatise. It is an autobiography with a purpose. The book may seem unnatural, but it is because the life was a calculation. Men are led mostly by custom, he by wisdom. He studied that he might reckon up the value of learning. He sought pleasure that he might know its bitterness and sweetness. He was busy that he might know the worth and vanity of industry. Every activity, every passion, every being, every mode of thought, was a study; and every study was for the benefit of his fellows: He seems to be a fool, but he is rather a wise man making experiments in folly—a philosopher blowing bubbles from which may come out the science of light.

The light at last shines forth from the darkness.

The Pharos sheds its rays, warning the mariners of the great sea of life from the rocks and quicksands. 'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,' is the conclusion of the matter. Every part is calculated for this end. The dark passages lead up to the radiant day. Life is a vanity, pleasure is folly, business is unsatisfactory, without duty and God. This is the lesson of the great KOHELETH.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BOOK.

It is no doubt inspired, but this inspiration must be truly conceived. The Spirit inspired the author to write the history of all the King's experiments, the motive from which he made them, and his sentiments regarding them. He also guided him in the announcement of the true end and duty of man. The experiments, motives, and sentiments are not on that account always good. I may write the history and opinions of a man; but it does not follow that I approve of what he has done as right, or of his theories as correct. Nor will it be necessary always to indicate wherein I differ from him, especially if he have at a later period corrected himself. So also is God the inspirer of this book, which, though it describe some very questionable doings, and utter very debatable sentiments, yet in

its ultimate results, leads from the creature to the Creator, from sensuous pleasure to the duty of worship, and from the vanity of things to the enjoyment of God.

We are not necessarily to receive every sentiment in the Bible as the mind of God. We can affirm that it was God's will that it should be placed on the record, but we must exercise judgment and discrimination as to whether it has as a sentiment the approbation of God. There are many acts recorded in the Bible which are not explicitly condemned, but of which neither God nor man can approve—acts, sometimes of good men, against which conscience recoils. We should not permit our reverence for the man to override our judgment of his conduct ; nor are we to accept the decisions, declarations, and opinions of the men of the Bible as infallible doctrines, till we have found that they are in harmony with the general tenor of the Christian faith. The serpent speaks lies in the Bible. Balaam uttered some sentiments which we discard, as did Balak who employed him. The Book of Job contains the discussions of Job and his three friends, and the young man Elihu ; but we are expressly told that the ' comforters ' of the afflicted man did not speak the thing that was right concerning God as Job had. They were utterly at fault regarding the mode of

working in the divine government. Nay, though Job's sentiments have the approval of God, yet theirs must be considered only as a comparative rightness, since God had already entered into controversy with him, and combated his positions. To take this or that passage at random in proof of a doctrine, without reference to the character of the speaker, the circumstances in which it was spoken, or its general harmony with the mind of God, is singularly vain, and leads to the falsest conclusions. Yet important doctrines are sometimes supported by texts, without reference to anything but the simple fact that they are found in the Bible. On the other hand, attacks have been made on the Bible because it contains sentiments which on examination are found to be the words not of God, but of wicked men. Thus in one of the *Essays and Reviews* an attempt is made to show that the prophecies have failed, because the prophecy of one denominated a false prophet is affirmed by the Scripture itself to have failed. Special care must therefore be taken to understand in what character any one,—Solomon, for example—appears before us. Does he speak as a prophet, or only as an observer or philosopher? Does he say, Thus saith the Lord, or, Thus it appears to me? Does he claim Divine illumination, or only human wisdom? If he appear as a Divine

messenger, we must investigate his claims ; and if they be well founded, submit to his decisions. But if he make no such claim—if he simply appear as the inquirer and experimenter, telling us what he has done, what good means and opportunities he had of doing it—we are not debarred from a free criticism on the manner of his inquiry, or the validity of his conclusions. That the record of his procedure is placed in this sacred book by the Spirit of God, neither prevents nor supersedes such examination. It is not placed in this collection that we should adopt and submit to its every conclusion, but that we might learn from the failures and follies of the King how little wisdom can do, even when aided by power and riches, especially when vice and folly are added to these transcendent gifts.

THE CHARACTER OF SOLOMON.

The character of Solomon is that of a great monarch with kingly vices—a form of glory yet tarnished with black spots. The splendour and shadow of his life are felt all over the East. His fame for wisdom, magnificence, and work is great among the nations. Weighed in the balance, he is found wanting. His character is an antithesis of virtue and vice, holiness and sin. He is pious and pro-

fane,—pure in sentiment, yet seeking after many strange women. He builds the temple to Jehovah, and a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon. He serves the Lord, yet goes after Ashtaroath, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the goddess of the Ammonites. He cherished pure sentiments, yet had many wives and concubines. His reign was peaceful, but this he owed more to his father's valour than to his own virtue. The stories told of his wisdom hardly sustain his reputation. Under him Israel was prosperous and happy; and those who worship success will find in this fact an apology for every crime. Wise in youth, he grows foolish as he gets old, though perhaps repentance came in time to restore his aged steps to the paths of virtue. Let us hope that the conclusion of this book shut in the latter part of the monarch's life—'Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.' The life that unfolds the doctrine of this text must needs be beautiful.

But the previous portion of Solomon's life was far enough from developing this moral ideal, and many of the sentiments of this book are in poor correspondence with it, though they may prepare the way for the perception of its truth. As anta-

gonists they show its strength, and secure its victory. We will need to take care that we do not render to those low sentiments which are expressed in the previous parts of the book, and illustrated in his life, that homage which is alone due to this conqueror in the lists. Experiment, passion, industry, pleasure, have all had their say; but this word of conscience hushes their babble. God and duty rise eternal and immutable above the changing forms and vanities of things, saying to the turbulent waves of sentiment, 'Peace, be still.' The excited sea of speculation subsides into a great calm before those grand words.

THE OBJECT OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOOK.

But why, from this view of Solomon's position and character, should so much of the Bible be taken up with his biography and experiments? We reply, for the important purpose of showing how far human wisdom, when aided by means and opportunities, can go; of making way for the fulness of time, when after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching of the Cross to put to shame the preaching of Solomon as well as the discussions of the philosophers.

COMPARATIVE MERITS OF SOLOMON'S TEACHING.

From the vantage ground of Christ's teaching we feel that we have an understanding of the things of morality and duty which Solomon had not. Many things we shall find, by him, acutely observed. His proverbs contain a clear insight into human nature, and his preaching many excellent instructions. Advices very valuable he sometimes gave, but they are far from reaching the top of the Sermon on the Mount. His thoughts sweep round the visible horizon, but he fails to discover the invisible. We may take him as our guide with a caution among common things, but knowing little of that higher morality which springs from faith. Probably, indeed, we should except his wonderful Song. Whether, however, he comprehended the deep spiritual meaning of his Odes of Love in their relation to Christ and the Church is questionable.—His soul hardly felt the divine harmony of his numbers. The primary meaning overshadowed the hidden intelligence. We, who have the later teachings of the Spirit, find in them wings on which to mount the heights of divine contemplation. In his Ecclesiastes, however, we remain on the lower surface of earth, driving as in the chariots of Amminadib, amid festal scenes and gardens, with fruits and flowers, enclos-

ing palaces where the wine-cup circles, and song sends out its sweet waves of sound on which the soul floats away to Elysian fields. We may, in our further contemplation of Solomon's sermons, take occasion to point to the better land. When we hear him bewailing the vanity of human work and joy, our ear will be the better fitted to hear what Jesus has spoken, and what the Spirit saith unto the churches. When we find that the happiness of the soul is not here, we may the more readily give our hand to the invisible guide who promises to lead us to enjoyment by another road. Solomon's wisdom may disappoint, but, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Strange that an obscure One over whose birth hung a cloud, without wealth or apparent power, should, by the shores of Galilee, claim superiority over him whom the East honoured as the wisest of its sages! No doubt, by the greater part of His hearers, His claims would be received with a sneer. Such language could be viewed but with scorn by those who looked back to the wisdom of Solomon, as transcending that of all ancient teachers. The claim, however, is modest in the extreme. In that form without comeliness there was a higher dignity than that of Solomon in all his glory. In that eye there was a discernment and penetration unknown to him who vainly strove to discover the causes of human

sorrow, suffering, and sin. In that hand lay a capacity of blessing, which all the riches of the Eastern King could not bestow. Before the glory of the only begotten Son of God, the glory of palaces and proverbs, of gold and song, of material grandeur and mental wisdom, grows pale and fades into insignificance. Solomon's night of stars and flitting aurora melts into the splendours of the day of Jesus Christ.

As explorers make voyages from their own sunny skies and moderate climes to polar regions, where winter as a tyrant rules the frozen year, that they may note the fauna and flora found capable of existence in those Arctic regions, and round the sciences of botany and zoology, so we may, leaving the warm bright zone of Christian thought and feeling, transport ourselves to the cold and twilight climes of rational wisdom where Solomon was doomed to dwell—not that we may remain there, but return with the knowledge of what the men of his time were and thought and did, and in the thankfulness that ours is a day of brighter manifestation and higher virtue, brought to perfection under the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

II.

WISDOM, PLEASURE, AND WORK.

'And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven.'—ECCLES. I. 13.

'Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure.'—ECCLES. II. 1.

'I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom), and to lay hold on folly.'—ECCLES. II. 2.

'I made me great works.'—ECCLES. II. 4.

WISDOM.

IN the first place, Solomon applied his heart to wisdom. It was that for which he prayed in early youth, and the prime of his manhood was employed in its acquisition. The wisdom of his day embodied in books was soon attained; for such treasures were then scarce. From these he would soon be free to receive such vocal wisdom as the men of his age could furnish. But above all he directed his mind to the study of men and things—the state of society, the conditions of good and evil, the value of riches and the evils of poverty, the nature of plants and animals; and he condensed the results of his observations and experiments in proverbial philo-

sophy. The divine gift of poetry which he inherited from his father, was also cultivated. So at an early period he attained a fame for wisdom exceeding that of all the men of his day.—‘He was wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about.’

WISDOM TO BE SOUGHT THROUGH THE PORTALS OF
YOUTH.

It may seem strange that his acquisition of wisdom should be placed before his life of pleasure, and experiments in enjoyment. It is, however, the truth of nature which so arranges it. He who becomes learned ever imbibes the desire for knowledge in youth. The learned man often becomes a rake, but the original rake seldom becomes a scholar. He who has pursued a practical business for half a life hardly ever becomes a philosopher. The acquisitions of literary treasure are usually made while life beats high-pulsed. A man who has devoted his principal time to sowing wild oats may turn his attention to the cultivation of the soil, but seldom to the cultivation of philosophy. Science selects her favourites from among the young. You may learn to plant and build, you may make awkward attempts in the practice of debauchery after having

eschewed these till you have arrived at the meridian of life; but you need hardly expect to do more than form a distant acquaintance with Wisdom after that date, if you have not paid worship before her shrine sooner. Learning awaits her passage through the gates of youth. It is natural, therefore, that we should find Solomon a wise young man, whatever he became in after years.

WISDOM NOT HAPPINESS.

The King found that wisdom which he so earnestly sought, incapable of procuring him the happiness which he expected. Amid the bountiful harvest of knowledge, he pined for a plant of which he found he had not sown the seed. Knowledge grew up tall and luxuriant over the wide field of thought, but that rare exotic, happiness, was nowhere to be seen. Fame, admiration, glory, riches, and consolidated power were his, but care and disappointment still rankled in the monarch's heart; and he turned himself to other pursuits to see whether he had not made a mistake in supposing wisdom the best of the gifts of Heaven. 'For,' said he, 'in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure.'

HAPPINESS SOUGHT IN A NEW CLIME.

From wisdom to pleasure—at one bound from the study to the banqueting-room, from deep researches to light witticisms, from silent contemplation upon the nature of things to uproarious mirth! Instead of practical experiment, the practical joke. His sage counsellors are dismissed, or transformed into the nightly revellers of whom alone for the time he makes companions. No doubt there was much admirable fooling round the monarch's board. What wisdom was transformed to wit! What jests were uttered! What uproar was heard! What cups were drained, while the chorus was added to the song, and the walls of the palace shook with laughter! We have no picture of the festal scenes or wild debaucheries into which Solomon plunged, but they were probably not very different from certain modern orgies with which many are but too well acquainted, and which only want the gorgeous splendours of the palace and genius to make them, in all their ruder parts at least, fit exemplars of the scenes in which the wise King enacted his part—scenes in which wine put dulness to flight, provoking the flashing repartee, and the loud long laugh, but which also brought in its train maudlin talk, redness

of eyes, shattered nerves, and all the usual sequels of the life of the debauchee.

And connected with these boisterous revels other sensual and emasculative pleasures were indulged in to the utmost extremes. All the variety of beauty of which the Eastern harem could boast solicited his love. Queens and concubines without number vied for his favours. He seems to have delivered himself over to all the distractions of multitudinous attachments. Compared with him, even the royal rakes of modern times are virtuous. Kings' daughters were his queens, and peasant beauties were his mistresses. The usual results, no doubt, were produced: an utter destruction of the tenderest sentiment of the heart; jealousies and quarrels; contempt for woman; utter disbelief in virtue; and a mind thoroughly carnalized.

PLEASURE ALSO VANITY.

The conclusion to which Solomon came regarding pleasure was, that it also was vanity, that laughter was mad, and that mirth did no good; while the result of his experience in strange and numerous attachments is—'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.'

'Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account; which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.'

ESTIMATE OF WOMAN.

A true woman, among all for whom he entertained either legitimate or unlawful loves, he has not found. This sentence of Solomon has been often quoted to show the utter worthlessness of the female character. It is, however, an entirely worthless conclusion as regards woman when placed in her legitimate and appropriate sphere as the one sole companion of man's life in love, cares, and labours. As well might the tyrant who, by cruelty, has alienated his subjects, complain that he has failed to find loyal men, as the debauchee who has subjected hundreds to his lust, that he had found no noble, virtuous woman. Did the pleasure-seeking King expect, in lieu of his own dissipated, debauched heart, one pure and undivided? It is not thus that the commerce of love is carried on. Pearls are not to be exchanged for pebbles. The law of love which God has established is heart for heart; and the affections that are dissipated among a thousand objects must ever be without return of that which yet the soul

seeks—the undivided love. Of this fact Solomon seems to have had a dim perception when he gives those never-to-be-forgotten advices to the young man, to avoid the strange woman whose steps take hold on hell, and to live joyfully with the wife of his youth. It was not given to Solomon, wise as he was, to limn the picture of the virtuous woman, but to another king whose wisdom was derived from the inspiration of his mother. The words of Lemuel are well worthy of our attention, both as neutralizing the false impression produced by Solomon's philosophy, and as showing what the true woman is:—'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the

distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household : for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry ; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it ; and delivereth girdles to the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing ; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom ; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed ; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates.'

HAPPINESS SOUGHT IN THE DOMAIN OF INDUSTRY.

The King, finding little satisfaction in the pursuit of knowledge, and still less in the following of pleasure,—disgusted with science, wine, and debauchery,—resolved to try a life of practical business. He finds that much study is a weariness to the

flesh ; that wine stingeth like an adder ; that favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; that so far, at least, the most lovely fruits have turned to dust and ashes on his lips ; that instead of pleasures, he has been drinking from gilded cups only sorrows and vexations ; yet, with that instinct which never leaves the children of those who once inherited Paradise, he turns his eye in other directions, hoping to discover its golden gates, and ready to force his way even against the fiery cherubim ;—or if he cannot discover Paradise, he will make it. The ideal of all the beauty that he can imagine shall become a thing of fact. He will plant gardens like Eden, waving with trees of umbrageous foliage and pleasant fruits. Every flower of beauty and fragrance shall bloom along its borders, and palaces of noble architecture shall spring up in the midst of all. Fountains shall flow, diffusing coolness ; and waterfalls shall mingle their music with the songs of birds. And away from these chosen retreats, woodlands and forests shall be seen intermingled with fields of corn and vineyards, tended by the slaves which he has purchased, or which have been born in his house. In such employment he thinks to find pleasant excitement ; and, when completed, will he not be happy ? So thinks the monarch one morning, after the pleasures of wine, and music, and mirth have left him

jaded and worn. His resolve was taken; for he tells us: 'I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.'

HAPPINESS THE DAUGHTER OF VARIETY.

Such were the experiments made by Solomon in pursuit of happiness. Like many another ardent

youth, he starts for the chief prizes of distinguished scholarship ; and when he has distanced all competitors, finding his soul famishing while luxuriating in fame, he plunges into dissipation. But the wine-cup leaves the aching head to muse over the evanescent happiness. The pleasure, too, which came at first with exquisite sweetness, soon palls. Sensual delights become ever weaker ; beauty fails to awake love ; and miserable dregs become thicker and darker as each new draught is taken. This will never do. But being a king, having not only men but nature under his command, there are many regions yet unexplored, and these also he will put to the question. He will become the master of architects, who shall design palaces and temples that shall eclipse all past wonders, and be the despair of all future artists ; the beautiful in nature shall become more glorious by the magic of art ; poetry, music, literature shall lend their charms ; the bard shall sing his verse to the accompanying minstrel ; commerce shall bring from afar whatever is exquisite for ease, comfort, or beauty ; the gold shall shine in vessels of rare workmanship on the table, and the cedar shall be inlaid with ivory, and the diamond shall sparkle on the finger and the brow ; purple, scarlet, and fine linen shall be his household clothing ; the day shall be filled up according to the regimen of wisdom ;

business, philosophy, and pleasure shall be the three graces of life. He has erred in seeking happiness in only one thing; but it will assuredly be found in the many. Especially will it not be wanting when religion, enshrined in the temple of Jehovah, blesses all; yet, says the King, 'All is vanity.'

THE VANITY OF THINGS ENDORSED BY MANY.

There is probably no sentiment more universally endorsed by mankind, after they have arrived at and beyond middle age, than this of the disappointed King; and the mode in which they arrive at his conclusion is similar. They start in life with a sense of trouble in the present; but they hope to solace themselves for the tears of childhood with the joys of youth. Manhood will give freedom and indulgence, and riper years will bring riches and enjoyment. But as one stage after another has been passed, after the hard experience of school and apprenticeship, the cares of business are also found to be wearisome. If they have sought the solace of meretricious pleasures—draining the wine-cup, and visiting the house of her whose feet take hold on hell—an experience is theirs so bitter, that they often curse life while they fear death. But though they have never indulged in unlawful pleasure, and have observed the laws of moderation, still there is

the complaint that all things are unsatisfactory. The world has disappointed them, and they feel as though they had a just right to quarrel with Providence. Few, probably, come to the conclusion that the lot of the happiest is, all things considered, no better than theirs. Providence, they think, has its prizes for its favourites, and they are not of the number. They probably think that if Solomon was not happy, he ought to have been. Observation, however, will continue to affirm, that a perfect happiness is not to be found in this world; not in the treasures of knowledge, nor the treasures of wealth; not in business, and certainly not in pleasure; not in illicit pursuits, nor even in the lawful; but that still in the best estate of men there is an insatisfaction which urges on to higher aims—a something which still beckons us away to seek after fountains which are purer, and which is ever whispering in the ear of the soul that these are the mere husks of happiness out of which the kernel has been threshed. This, we are certain, is the general experience and sentiment of mankind.

III.

INSATISFACTION.

'All is vanity.'—ECCLES. I. 14.

THE AUTHOR OF PROGRESS.

VARIOUS explanations have been offered of this strange restlessness and insatisfaction. Two main ones seem worthy of attention.

One set of observers see in all this insatisfaction the mainspring of activity, progress, and improvement. If man, say they, found happiness at any point of his life, he would cease to aim at a higher state. The most contented people are ever the most barbarous, and the beast of the field is more contented than the lowest classes of men. With animals and men of the lowest grade there is stagnation. The new generations are no improvement on the past. The bird builds its nest, the wild beast inhabits a den, and the Indian a hut, as their ancestors did fifty generations ago. Not until you produce insatisfaction, not, rather, till you give the mind ability to conceive the higher state, and aim

at elevation from the lower, will the world be improved. Without insatisfaction the arts would be impossible, and all higher enjoyments unknown. Without it man would be a beast. It is a necessity of the superior organization, with its inhabiting soul, that it be unsatisfied with what is inferior to it, and it ever strives to bring the discordant elements of things into forms of use and beauty, in accordance with its own higher nature. It has enjoyments in common with the beast; but it has a higher nature, for which these enjoyments are but husks. Sense without reason and imagination and wonder may be gratified with the sensual, but mind demands the true and the beautiful; and as the true is ever difficult to attain, and the beautiful never perfect, the higher nature in man goes continually about seeking for these as though it yet possessed nothing, and could not be happy while that which was wanting was not found. So goeth ever forth the high intellect and soul of man, leaving the ninety and nine enjoyments at home, that he may find among the mountains of speculation or practical being the more excellent things that remain to be discovered. And ever the nobler and more far-reaching in view the mind is, the more will it wander, and seek, and win for itself the lost or undiscovered. For there would seem to be in the

darkness and the light around, ever the dim forms of the good and the excellent, which the swift and valiant soul may, by powerful effort, secure for itself, and embody in some tangible and sweet-smiling image. And ever, as one after another of these is secured, doth the soul long for others, so that new enjoyments may smile on it. Who, then, can complain of this unrest, which is ever adding new beauties and graces to adorn humanity, which makes man a fellow-worker with God, who gave him the world—the MUNDUS—the adorned—that he might make it ever more beautiful? ¹

This, then, is one explanation of the matter. Insatisfaction was implanted in the high and noble nature of man, that he might improve, ennoble, and beautify the world—the present earthly scene of things. What the goad is to the ox, the spur to the horse, and fear to the slave, insatisfaction is to man. It urges him forward in a career in which he might flag, making his aim still higher the more and greater his attainments.

THE SPIRITUAL VIEW.

A second and higher view is that which, while admitting that insatisfaction is the mainspring of activity and progress, still further affirms that it is

¹ Ruskin has this sentiment developed somewhere.

indicative of a nature in man to be satisfied, not with the terrestrial, but with the heavenly,—not with the things of sense, but with the things of faith,—not with the creature, but with God.

This is surely the true explanation of that unrest of the soul which still, after each new conquest, whether of truth or means of enjoyment, feels unsatisfied. It is the higher nature in us that is still ungratified. We want to know truth and beauty—all truth and beauty; not merely their outward shadows, but themselves. In a region of limitation this is impossible; but when divested of those bodily organs, which were fitted only to know and enjoy the material, the soul, either by some higher and nobler form of organization, or of its own innate nature, shall—so reason and the revealed testify—know even as it is known. It shall feel satisfied in the higher region of discovery. But we must stop with having indicated the view; for who can describe what passes in the regions of the immortals? If it were now knowable, it would be unsatisfactory. Persons who attempt to describe heaven darken counsel by words without knowledge. There is a veil which now covers all, and which shall only be lifted for each of us by the hand of death. Meanwhile with reverence we bow before the Holy of Holies.

THE SIN ELEMENT.

But still further, as elucidative of this unrest of man, we have to take into account the fact of depravity and sinfulness. I rather think that this fact, however, is not to be considered as explanatory of our insatisfaction so much as of dissatisfaction. Insatisfaction is right ; dissatisfaction is wrong. God intended that the soul should not be satisfied ; but He wants that we shall not be dissatisfied. We are not to sit down contented with the present, making no attempts for its improvement ; but we are not to go about whining and complaining. Our business is to make things as right and enjoyable as possible, not to scream out our despair, and rock like mourners in the lazy chair of indolence. The improvement and rectification of things which have become disordered, is the business of the good, renewed man ; but the feeble cry of impotence in the presence of the ills of life, is closely related to the sin which produced them. The man who, unsatisfied with attainments, and states of being around him, attempts to rectify and rise above the evils, is pursuing the wise and noble course ; but he who vents his dissatisfaction in complaints, or curses, or denunciations, without attempting the removal of the ills, is a nuisance to be put down or got rid of

as soon as possible. Rather go forth, like Solomon, to investigate what may be the good which men should do and enjoy; like him, plant and build; but at the same time it will not be wise either to plunge into his sensualities, or to reiterate too often, although it does contain an important truth, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Much light is yours, which Solomon, wise as he was, had not. He probably had glimpses of the depravity of his own heart, and generally of the human heart, yet hardly with the demonstrative clearness with which it comes home to our convictions; and he seems to have been greatly in the dark relative to that future life which hath been brought to light through Christ, to which is reserved the full enjoyment of the soul. He said, All is vanity, because he did not know *the all*. His eye ranged only over time. Eternity was all darkness.

LIFE A SCHOOL.

And this summons before us another view explanatory of the insatisfaction of man. We are here preparing, conning our lesson, forming our character—a character which is to last with us for ever. We were not sent here that we might enjoy, but that we might learn, that we might grow up strong men fit to live through the everlasting ages. Yet the great

body of even Christian people are looking for enjoyment as their sole end and aim. They have renounced the world that they may have the joys of Christianity. Christ promised them a cross, but they want comfort. They will have positive bliss, present fruition, instead of patience, experience, and hope. Fools! The Christian life is a race, a battle, a work, a crucifixion. Through the portals of death alone we gain the Elysian fields.

This insatisfaction which Solomon found in all things, then, we are to attribute to the design of God, that man should go on in progressive stages of improvement; to show him his true nature, and that he possesses a soul that is immortal, to be satisfied only with nobler things than this world can afford. It is also to be attributed in large measure to the disordered state of his soul, which is out of true harmony, and sends forth dissonant sounds when struck by the hand of Providence. The present is still further a state preparatory to the higher condition, a state in which character is formed, in which, by wrestling with the evil, we get strong and noble. With these views, we may see that however pertinent the wail of Solomon over the vanity and vexations of life was in his day, it sounds sadly offensive now. It was like the note of the cuckoo ushering in the spring of thought, hailed also then,

as, though harsh and monotonous, it proclaimed the seed-time of reason and revelation ; but, like the note of the same bird in autumn, out of place now when the full harvest of revelation waves before our delighted eyes. Vanity of vanities in itself, our world is yet the substantial vestibule, out of which we shall erewhile find entrance into the glorious realms of permanency and bliss.

JUSTICE TO SOLOMON MUST LOOK TO HIS LAST

CONCLUSION.

We should not do the wise King justice did we not refer to his conclusion. We are to look upon the Book of Ecclesiastes as jottings of the various experiments of Solomon in the pursuit of enjoyment—a pursuit which he seems to have undertaken with the view not so much to his own selfish pleasure, as to make known the results of his whole experience for the benefit of the sons of men. There was method in his folly, and philosophy even in his sensuality. He does not propose himself as an example to imitate, but as a beacon to warn youth away from the dangerous shoals, and quicksands, and rocks, where he suffered shipwreck. His work was something like the log-book of Arctic explorers, which tells of icebergs ready at each moment to crush their vessels, but also of the

impossibility of sailing by any northern passage to the lands of the far west—a warning from all thoughts of commerce through the regions of eternal frost. So are we warned that not this way which he sailed on the voyage of life are we to expect to come to the port of all human wishes, but by another course altogether, which at the very conclusion of his voyage he indicates. ‘Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.’ ‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.’

PRACTICAL SUMMARY.

Not in acquiring knowledge, then, though it be power—not in accumulating the truths of science, valuable as they are—not in the higher regions of philosophic investigation—not in deep inquiries into the causes of good and evil—not in the wine-cup, though it promises fairly with traitorous tongue—not in sensuality—not in commerce or business, or in the works of art, are you to expect to find unalloyed enjoyment. Neither are you to be disappointed at not finding it there. It was not intended you should. The immortal in you cannot

be fed on such things. You are related to the angels—you are sons of God. Through duty shall you come to strength, and stature, and fulness of development. Suffering shall make you men. Disappointments below shall prepare you for the fruition above. Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ; but the fear of God must be the foundation of all, and the love of God the crown of all. Fear God, and keep His commandments : for this is the whole duty of man.

Such is the general outline of the lesson which we are to derive from the projects of Solomon in pursuit of happiness. We shall have yet to deal with the insoluble questions which perplexed him, as well as the puzzles, but which are of easy resolution. Meantime, let each of us look up to the shining lights of truth, which shed their radiance over the dark paths of life, walking in the conscious guidance of the Spirit of God, and the revelation of His grace. If you seek wisdom, let it be the wisdom which cometh from above ; if pleasure, let it have the sanctions of conscience, enlightened by the Word ; if you devote yourselves to business, let it be with the consciousness that you are fellow-workers with God. ‘ In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He will direct thy steps.’

IV.

THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF LABOUR.

‘What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?’—ECCLES. I. 3.

‘I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.’—ECCLES. I. 14.

‘Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.’—ECCLES. II. 11.

THE QUESTION.

THE first question which Solomon raises for our consideration is a very important one. It is, What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

NARROW AND BROAD VIEWS OF PROFIT—THE MATERIAL.

The King here takes a wide and comprehensive view of the profitable, and one with which it will do us no harm to familiarize our conceptions. We are much taken up with questions of profit and loss; but with us that means a cash account, or property which represents cash—or, rather, is represented by it. The dollar, or the house, or

its furniture, or the field, or its productions, or articles of trade out of which there may be produced something that is wanted, which we can sell and turn into money or use,—these things are alone accounted profit by us. But it is evident that there is more in Solomon's thought, when he inquires, What profit hath a man of all his labour? In the monetary view, his question would only be pertinent to the case of the slave, or to the poor labourer who had never succeeded in accumulating any of the goods of this world. To him, indeed, it would be very pertinent. The slave owns not himself, nor can he own property; and many a poor man is in just as bad a case. Millions of our race are compelled to toil through life for a bare subsistence. The price of their labours hardly suffices to sustain their ability to continue them. A roof to cover them, a little clothing to protect them from the cold, and the poorest kind of food on which the human frame has found it possible to subsist,—this is the portion of all their labour; but at the end of the year, or at the end of life, they are as poor as when they commenced, and they have no profit of all the labour they have undertaken under the sun. We, like Solomon, they may say, have engaged in building, and planting, and beautifying things; but no profit has come to us. Though we have helped

to build many houses, we dwell in hired rooms ; though we have planted pleasant trees, we gather no fruits from them ; though we have decked many gardens, we dare not pluck one of the flowers. Others have the profit ; we only had the labour. The wise man's question has a meaning which we, at least, can understand. We would almost think, in reading this sentence, that he was not a king, but one of ourselves ; or a poor, dusty, ragged labourer, striving to keep body and soul together, and support a wife and little ones in a lot in no respect superior to our own.

Again, in this material point of view, his question would be pertinent to that numerous class of society, who, after much exertion and application to business, have been unsuccessful ; who find that, after what were considered the wisest speculations, and after success seemed to have borne them up high on its swelling tide toward the rich haven of prosperity, have found all their hopes stranded or broken on the rocks. All their brain-work and hand-work, and all their organization of labour, while they may have been conducive to the general welfare, have produced for them only a depleted purse and wasted credit. The anxieties they have endured have only ruined their health ; and as they near the end of their eventful life, dust-stained and

travel-worn, the philosophy of Solomon, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, and that man has no profit of anything which he undertakes under the sun, contains the sum of their experience ; and they almost think, Surely Solomon was one of us : probably he felt all the evils we have experienced in embarrassed finances ; his expenses had exceeded his income, and he was at his wit's end how to pay his bills as they became due. ' There is no profit '—that, at least, is one wise sentence which has come down to us from antiquity. ' Vanity of vanities.'

But there is also a large class of mankind who cannot adopt the sentiment of Solomon in this meaning. They have had profit. They have houses and lands, and a large balance with their bankers. They have money with which to procure every enjoyment on which they set their hearts. Their table is richly supplied ; their home is the abode of luxury and beauty. Profit ! Their labour has procured it—the winds have wafted it to them on every breeze. Not in any material view can they adopt the language of Solomon. On every hand they find witnesses to contradict him. In the house, in the street, in the harbour, in the stock-market, in the wide-spreading lands, they find good reason to discard the sentiment : all substantial, nothing vain,—profit beyond the wildest visions of

youthful hope from all their labour. Certainly, Solomon meant not what he said.

These two classes—the unsuccessful and the successful—will give very different answers to the question, What profit?

The proportion of the successful to the unsuccessful is not easily arrived at. Of men in retail business in some large cities, more than sixty in the hundred fail; while the proportion of merchants who become bankrupts, in the same cities, is some ninety in the hundred. But the men of business are but a small proportion of the population of great cities, and still smaller of countries. Still, we should not wonder if there should be found, on examination, somewhat of a similar proportion of mechanics and artisans who find no profit from all the labour which they have undertaken under the sun—probably three without profit for one who has remaining, after bare subsistence, what might be called a balance worthy of the name of profit. We should have three complaining with Solomon, for one whose experience in this material view will go against him. This is likely a very high average of those who might be called successful, and obtains probably only in very favoured districts; while in others there are against every one no doubt ten who would say, ‘We have no profit in all our labours.’

CAUSES OF FAILURE.

The causes of this poverty of the masses are many. Chance—meaning by that, as the poet expresses it, ‘direction which thou canst not see’—is at the foundation of all. Then there are some endowed with those talents which ensure success in fortune-making, and by which they distance all competitors. The habits which one has formed almost of necessity bring abundance to him, while it is the nature of another to labour little and to spend much. From the very nature of competition, it is necessary that some should go beyond others. We cannot have equality. If the goods of all were equally divided to-day, before a year marked differences would be apparent. Some by that time would have become poor, while others would have laid the foundations of fortune. We must ever have the rich and the poor—the labourer and the organizers of labour—those who have no profit of all their works, and those who count it by thousands and tens of thousands.

BROADER VIEW.

But, as we intimated before, it is not in this merely material phase that the question is to be viewed. It has other aspects. Solomon speaks

not merely of labour in general, but of his own labours in particular. These represent much material wealth. The cities which he has built bring him large revenues; his grounds produce abundantly; his gardens are loaded with luscious esculents and fruits. We do not hear that inclement seasons smite his lands with famine, or that importunate creditors dun him for payment. Everything he puts his hand to is successful. Riches are around him; beauty, in every form, and colour, and attitude, meets his eye. His table groans beneath all that is exquisite, from every clime. Yet, as he moves amid all this splendid panorama of pleasant things, he says, 'What profit?'

We cannot but think that Solomon's views on the question are greatly astray. His dissatisfaction arose, not from the vanity of the things, but from the vanity of his own heart. It is of the nature of every excess to produce lassitude, and nervousness, and miserable feeling; and certainly a king who indulges in every species of excess is not in a good position, however strong may have been his original mind, to give us a true view of the nature of human life, or a right view of things in general. We are not to suppose that wine and sensuality would not produce their usual effects on the body and mind of Solomon, or that he was exempt from the usual

effects with which flattery fills a monarch's ears. He commenced life with unusual expectations. He was determined, if possible, to find out that which it was good for the sons of men to do and to enjoy; but he did many things which the sons of men should not do, and he drank of cups of which none ever yet tasted who did not suffer, to the destruction of the capacity of purer enjoyments; and all he can say that is of any value is, 'I have missed the way; avoid my errors. Fear God, and keep His commands.'

REVIEW OF THE QUESTION.

Now our question recurs, Is there any profit in a man's labour? We think there is.

There is one of Solomon's gardeners. He has not been at the banquet last night. But that thought does not trouble him, for he never supposed that such honours were for slaves like him. He comes into the King's garden in the early morning, before the orb of day has begun to show himself over the mountains of Judea. The dews have left on every leaf and petal a mirror in which the sun may behold an image of himself. The flowers are expanding themselves to receive his influence and deck themselves with the colours of his rays. Birds of glowing plumage and sweet voice flit among the

branches of the fruit-laden trees. Song, beauty, and fragrance form a sweet company which goes rejoicing through the aisles of the man's soul. He bends to look on this pure lily of the valley, whose cup under his cultivation is larger, and whose colour is purer than can again be found in all the gardens of Judea. That vine, too, has larger grapes; that pomegranate a more luscious flavour. These flowers and fruits are his pride; he has a fellow-feeling for them; they are his children. His labour, which gave him health while he cultivated them, has also reared around him these joys. Solomon, who pays him well for cultivating those plants and fruits, may find but little profit when he comes forth amid the noonday sun, under the influence of the vapours of last night's wine-cup, and may say, 'What profit?' But this gardener knows better, and sweet rejoicings fill his soul; while the monarch, with brow severe and frowning, repeats the main axiom of his philosophy, 'Vanity of vanities.'

PROFIT EVERYWHERE.

There is not a single pursuit in life out of which the food of satisfaction may not be extracted. Some pursuits are among more lovely objects than others, but the beautiful and proportionate soul can put into even common things its own order and fitness,

and in them see its own image. It would not be possible for man to work satisfactorily were it not for the use and beauty which he can put into his work ; but this is the fruit of his labour—the satisfaction he has in beholding his own thought mirrored there. The architect is satisfied when he sees his conceptions of truth, beauty, and fitness embodied in the temple of wood or stone. When the ship of fair proportions leaves the place of her birth, and rides on the water, a thing of beauty, there is not a man who has been employed in her construction that does not feel a glow of satisfaction sufficient to reward him for all his labours. Then the carpenter, builder, and shoemaker must all feel, in working the uncouth forms of matter into things of use and proportion, a pleasure which renders labour light and life enjoyable.

THE MOST PROFITABLE EMPLOYMENT.

Those who are employed in the productions of art have a more direct pleasure arising from their business, perhaps, than those who are engaged in commerce or trade. O if I could only be a merchant ! thinks the steam-engine maker or the saw-mill worker. Well, what then ? Suppose you were ? You would have accounts to keep, you would have markets to watch, and other excitements ; but would

you have so much satisfaction in correspondence, and calculations of commission, and tare and tret, and bills of exchange—though there is a pleasurable excitement in the knowledge of these mysteries too? Yet are they, after all, as agreeable as fitting valves, polishing cylinders, and proportioning the various wheels and cranks to the sweet working of the machine? There is a farmer, too, who thinks his a poor lot in life! The fool! Why, what is the merchant or the trader working so hard for every day, but to amass as much wealth as will enable him to go in a green old age to enjoy it amid the very things which the farmer would leave to adopt the merchant's business? A young man quits the country to make money in the city, that he may go back to the country and enjoy the remainder of life. It seems, does it not, that he would be wiser to stay in the country amid the fresh breezes, the scent of flowers, and the trees? And if he have a well-proportioned nature, not smitten with the shows and vanities of life, he will find in the very objects around him, and which his industry has caused to spring up, the fruit of all his labour.

Let it then be kept prominently before the mind that, really, there is fruit of labour to him that works and opens his eyes to see and enjoy it.

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NO PROFIT IN IDLENESS.

I suppose that that man will never enjoy labour who does not work. One who is continually going about pleasure-hunting, saying, Who will show us any good?—who is offering rewards for the invention of a new pleasure—experience has demonstrated that these are the most miserable of men. Better grind knives and scissors than go about without anything to do, seeking new sensations.

But even when we do labour, we require to open our eyes. Matter-of-fact people are the least matter-of-fact people in the world. He was, no doubt, a very matter-of-fact man concerning whom Wordsworth says,—

‘A primrose by the river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more;’

but there were many matters of fact in the primrose which he did not see: its proportion, its emblematic nature, its power to evoke the emotions of the soul, these were hidden things from him, yet great and glorious facts. The eyes of our understanding require to be opened that we may see the glorious things concealed within the visible wrappings. Nature is just like those parcels sent from

dry-goods shops in common grey paper, but which when opened up display to the eye things very lovely. There is the dust and smoke and sweat wrapped round all our works of labour, but interiorly is there not fitness and proportion and harmony? If we have set up as our only standard of usefulness something which we can eat or drink, we may say, 'What profit?' when we have done; but if we take these other things into account, we shall be ready to say, 'Well, there is some good in labour after all.'

REAPING FROM OTHERS' SOWING.

This will the more appear if we can get our thoughts out of the regions of mere selfishness. That we may see how we ought to take a wide view of the value of labour, let us reflect how other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. Our fathers before us, and our brethren around us, have all added to the stock of useful human things; and so ought we. No man liveth to himself. We all live a vicarious life. If we do not enjoy much of the fruits of our own labour, we at least have enjoyed the fruits of the labour of those who were before us. But this appears to have been one of the reasons why Solomon saw no profit in all the labour which a man undertook under the

sun, namely, he was compelled to leave all ; and this necessity was aggravated by the thought, that his heir might be a fool and not a wise man. He should have reflected that others left for him much that was comfortable and enjoyable ; and if this did not mitigate his sorrow for leaving them, it should at least have reconciled him somewhat to the justice of the dispensation.

WHY GRIEVE TO LEAVE THE UNPROFITABLE ?

It ought also to be remarked, that Solomon is dissatisfied with his labours, yet grieves to leave them. He says there is no pleasure in them, and yet it pains him to think of another possessing them ; he finds them vanity and vexation of spirit, concludes that the dead is better than the living, and that the unborn is better than either, though it is hard to see how one who has yet to go through a sad experience is in a better case than one who has got to the end of the briery way. There is in all this, perhaps, a latent feeling, very common, that though he had not found out the secret of enjoying them, his heir would. Still, let us do justice to the monarch. His chief grief was that a fool might enter upon his possessions, might dissipate the riches he had amassed, and destroy the labours of his hands. This is a serious consideration to every

benevolent heart. There are people who, when all is going to wreck around, may find consolation in the thought that the world will last their day. But most people have a feeling that they would like the world, their own country, their own homestead, to go on prosperously, even after they have no further personal interest in its concerns. A strange bond of sympathy unites us to the world of the future, though we shall have no conscious interest in it, and no unconscious interest beyond the two feet by six where our dust reposes. A man about to leave the world has as strong a sympathy for it, just as much interest in its works, and labours, and politics, as if he had many years yet to live. He lives in his children and friends; he lives in the trees he has planted, and the houses he has erected. It is not possible to sever his love from that world which was once his home, and where he suffered and enjoyed so much. He wants to foresee, if not see, its prosperity. Besides, who shall tell us that we shall not also have a future conscious interest in the works and labours that are done under the sun? It was said to Daniel, 'Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days,'—a sentence which, whatever be its full meaning, certainly indicates that we are in some way interested in the future developments of this world. In Solomon's anxiety,

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therefore, about the heirship of his labours, we find a laudable sentiment,—one which should not merely exist in all our breasts, but which also should lead to important action, and which we are glad to think does. Conscientious people not only try to do substantial work, build substantial houses, but also to raise up substantial men and women—wise, not fools. It is more than probable that Solomon's anxiety about the way in which his works would be treated by his heir, arose from neglect in his duty to his heir. His whole life is unfavourable to the supposition that he paid much personal attention to the cultivation of the minds and consciences of the heir or heirs-apparent. His family relations were by no means conducive to the good training necessary to his children. He must have had his time wonderfully occupied with his many marriages, and the distractions arising out of the manifold relationships therein springing, to say nothing of his studies and philosophies, and city-building and temple-building, and commercial engagements. His children might, indeed, have numerous instructors to teach them the various wisdom of the day; but at least Solomon could have no knowledge how far these instructions were given or profited by. The great probability is, that he knew very little about Rehoboam, and that Rehoboam cared very little

about him, and that it would have been a wonderful thing if he had been less foolish than he proved himself to be. The monarch had just cause for his anxiety.

THE DISSIPATION OF RICHES.

Little profit, indeed, has that man in the labour which he hath undertaken under the sun, who looks forward with uncertain mind to the probable dissipation of all the riches he has amassed, to the dilapidation of the buildings which he has reared, to the loss of a kingdom which he has established and covered with renown. Little wonder that the King should go about dissatisfied with life, dissatisfied with his labours; but we do wonder that he was not more dissatisfied with himself. He never seems to suspect that much folly was mingled with his wisdom. He finds plenty of cause for complaint about the vanity of the world, the vanity of labour, of pleasure, of sensual indulgence, and of wisdom; but he sees not that the vanity of his own heart was the reason of all the other vanities,—that his own indulgences were the cause of his weariness and misery,—that neglect of the plain requirements of the natural laws of God left him a mere wreck of humanity,—that the manners and customs of the times, the licentious morals of the court, were at

the foundation of that wail of his, and that especially in his fear about the wisdom of his heir, he was largely to blame. It by no means follows, that after the most judicious training, children will turn out well, nor is it an invariable rule, that those who have been neglected shall turn out ill ; but it is a general rule, that where we want true wisdom to grow, we must sow its seeds in the spring-time of life ; and it is also a general rule, that neglect in training, or bad training, will produce woful results. It may seem strange that we should suspect Solomon of this neglect—Solomon, who is so often quoted for his wisdom in regard to the training up of children ! But we look to the facts of Solomon's history ; we look to the folly of the young Rehoboam ; and we come to the conclusion, that a man may preach well to others, and give no heed to his own counsel. Indeed, the very abstractions of scientific and literary pursuits, while they enable their devotee to give wise advice, in great measure incapacitate him from taking it ; and if other bad habits are added, as in the case of Solomon, the son will in all probability be a fool.

ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE GENERATION.

It is a good thing that man cannot relieve himself from anxiety about the world, even when he

shall have passed away from it ; for this anxiety is the origin of all those exertions which he makes in raising up a worthy posterity. Happily he cannot act on the principle, 'The world will last during my day : ' therefore does he set himself with more or less of energy to provide that youth shall be trained in wisdom's ways ; therefore always our prayer, that the rising generation may be better than their fathers were ; therefore our schools, secular and Sabbath ; therefore our catechetical instructions, and maxims for the young. We may not be able to make any certain provision against the influx of a wide-sweeping folly. We are like the Hollanders, whose homes are beneath the level of the tide-waters, which sometimes (do what the inhabitants will) make their efflux over and through the banks, laying provinces in ruins. But still with energy is the tide rolled back, and the inundating waters pumped out, and the land recovered. So we are ever in danger of being inundated by the waters of ignorance and vice, which threaten to sweep us away ; but by attention to our embankments, to our moral laws and Christian institutions, to our associations for stemming the course of vices which threaten our peace and content, we may be, and have, under the good providence of God, been able to keep our generations free from the devastating tides of immorality and secularism

which continually threaten us. It is only by strict and constant attention to this duty on the part of all—on the part of philosophers, ministers, teachers, parents—that, living, as human nature does, below the tide-level of vice and ignorance, it may be preserved from destruction. Let any large portion of the community be neglectful of their duty in this respect, and soon we shall see the glory of our nation overwhelmed, and the energies and labours of the past century brought to ruin.

RESULTS YET UNSATISFACTORY.

Though we have affirmed that many have profit from their labour—profit which appears in the shape of substantial goods, profit also in the enjoyment with which it was attended in the execution; and though we have assigned as one chief cause of its unsatisfactoriness, the disorder of the nature which we bring to its performance, the blindness of eye with which we view it, refusing to see its beauty, or recognise its mysterious use; and though we have, still further, admitted that our desire for the world's future welfare was implanted in us that we might be thereby urged to educate and bring up a seed to serve and glorify Him; we are yet far from saying that the result of our labours is of a satisfactory kind. They fail, for they have no permanence.

Time wears and wastes them. The stone will decay, the iron will rust, and the gold will tempt the cupidity of the robber. We shall have to speak further yet of the insatisfaction which Solomon found in labour; but in the meantime we cannot refrain from observing that, above and beyond the reasons which, in a former chapter, we assigned of a merely secular kind for this insatisfaction in the things with which man is called to deal, there was another reason to be found in his superior and immortal nature,—a nature not to be put off with mere objects of sense, though it be educated by their instrumentality,—a nature which, in its aims and aspirations after immortal fame, gives indications of its own undying being—which, in its attempts to make a name that shall live through the future generations, gives evidence that, when it has passed through the portals of the grave, it still consciously beholds the ever-rolling events as they sweep through the cycles of time, and evermore, as it sees the designs and works of God approaching towards a higher perfection, feels within itself the presence of which it did not previously experience. And if (as we trust he did, with all his attainments and his perfections) he received the grace which is renewing, no doubt now has much brighter views of the grand designs of God in making man, and giving him wherewith to be exercised with his

sore labour ; and sees, as we shall all, we trust, yet see, that God's purposes are good, however in this world he may have failed in his appreciation of them ; and that out of the chaos a beautiful order of things is emerging, very good, and ever better, until the new heavens and the new earth shall be beheld in all their beauty, leaving the heart nothing further to desire.

V.

NOVELTY.

'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north: it whirleth about continually; and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

'Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

'There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.'—ECCLES. I. 4-11.

CHANGE EVERYWHERE.

ALL things substantially stable are in a state of change, and have their peculiar activities as well as man, and as if intended to satisfy him, intent on novelties, with something new. But change is not novelty. He thinks to see something new, but he sees only some old event, which first astonished and then tired his fathers and grand-

fathers, appealing to his sentiment of wonder in some different dress. The oblivion into which it is the tendency of all events to sink, favours the illusion that we are making discoveries. History has failed to keep a record of the past, and the news-mongers of the day call attention to the inventions, and discoveries, and extraordinary events which, for the time, boil up from the bosom of a world ever in a state of turbulent agitation, without suspecting that, long ago, other wonder-gazers and discoverers talked with astonishment of the same things, ere they were engulfed in the whirlpool, whence, after undergoing an accustomed cycle of gyrations, they are now cast up to the gaze of the marvel-lovers of the present age. To a man who wants something substantial and novel, this is a great vanity. Such is the amount of the sentiment of the King, translated into the vernacular of our day.

There are several positions here taken by the King which we may with profit investigate. Some of them are, indeed, truisms; but truisms are often first truths, which require to be observed and laid down in our search after the higher. The commonest observation alone was required to discover that 'one generation passeth away, and another cometh.' The abiding nature of the earth was also, up to a certain point, an easily established fact.

The traditions of the past reached far back through many generations, all indicating permanence of the habitation, though the tenure of the tenants was but short. Still, that the earth abideth *for ever* is a truth that does not lie on the surface of things. There are many things which, to the casual observer, apparently point in the opposite direction. Many things on earth seem to suffer consumption; and before the positive science of modern ages demonstrated the absolute indestructibility of the least particle of matter, it would have seemed a very fair conclusion, that however long the earth, or even the sun, might continue in existence, there was a time coming when waste would do its work on them, and reduce them to nothingness—that, in the language of the poet, not only the ‘cloud-capped towers, and gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples, but the great globe itself might yet dissolve, and, like an unsubstantial pageant faded, leave not a wreck behind;’ or, in the words of another favourite of the muses,—

‘The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years.’

Nor is such an event impossible. And the immortality of the soul being a doctrine of faith, it may yet flourish in immortal youth,

‘Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.’

MAN SPIRITUAL ALONE PERMANENT.

The generations of men will then be found to be the permanent things of the world, and instead of affirming that the generations come and go, in the sense that they become non-existent, while the material scheme continues, we shall see reason for affirming that the fashion of the world passeth away, but that the word of the Lord, and he that believeth and doeth it, abide for ever.

THE BALANCE OF CHANGE.

Very wonderful is this economy of nature by which everything is for the present held in the balance. Very wonderful is that machinery which brings the water from the seas to the highlands. Extraordinary is that power which sends our earth ever revolving upon its own axis and ever wheeling through its elliptic orbit in the heavens, giving us the agreeable vicissitudes of night and day, and summer and winter. Very astonishing are the laws by which the atmosphere is governed ; by which the winds are held in obedience, or, the rein being given to them, they go madly sweeping over the earth or the ocean ; but far more wonderful is that economy by which the human race, though short-lived as in-

dividuals, sweeps on its course with ever accumulative force—short-lived as far as earth is concerned, and yet eternal. All things, we might say, save man, are explicable. We can calculate the orbit of our planet; we attempt, at least, to form theories regarding the mode of its formation; and we have made considerable progress in deciphering the record in which it has written its own history on its surface. We have made ourselves familiar with the inhabitants of the great geologic eras, and can talk wisely of the carboniferous, reptile, and mammal periods of pre-adamite history. We know the laws of motion, of fluids, of the stars, and even of storms. The deep secrets of the former days have been unveiled, and those which still elude the eye of discovery we expect to see brought out some time shortly into light. We have even gone to a great length in discovering the nature and constitution of man. As far as he is a material being, he is known as the subject of material laws. Mind, too, has responded to many of the interrogations which have been addressed to it, and the actions of men have been made the subject of calculation. The average of life and the average of honesty have been respectively made the basis of insurance. It is difficult to discover any portion of the science of the natural man, into which his eye has not endeavoured

to look. Yet is there much of his own most intimate being which is a mystery to him. He is conscious of thoughts and feelings which he cannot explain. He came whence? He goes whither? Why is he here? To what does he tend? Solomon could only say he cometh and he goeth; but neither he nor any other of the wise has been able to pierce the mystery from which he enters the golden gate of life, or into which he proceeds through the dismal gate of death. He brings with him no recollections, he returns to tell no tales. Memory denies any past existence which speculation would give him; but hope and faith have discovered for him a future, though of its special nature we know but little. That we shall be we know; what we shall be we are ignorant.

Let us take up some of the threads of thought which appear to form the material of Solomon's speculations.

MAN NOT TO BE CLASSED ALTOGETHER WITH THE
MATERIAL.

The first thing that strikes us is, that he places the comings and goings of the generations of men in the same class with such events as the rising and setting of the sun, the changes in the wind, the importation of the waters from the ocean to the

mountains, and their exportation from the hills to the seas. This is all very well when considered as poetry, but not correct as a conclusion of science. The material idea is, that they are all fluctuating; that man comes and goes as the waters of the river, as the turning of the wind. But there is this precise difference between man and the elemental things to which he is compared: the volume of the atmosphere and of the waters, taken as a whole, has been always the same, but the generations of man commenced with a single pair, and now they number a thousand millions. The wind rushes hither and thither according to the precise atmospheric laws; the waters are collected in the clouds, fall upon the earth, and make their way to the ocean in conformity with well-known principles; but it is the same air, it is the same wind, and there are the same amounts of them, from the beginning of the world to the present time. But this cannot be affirmed of man—especially of man as a thinking, moral, and spiritual being. As to his body, it may be affirmed that he is only a composition of earth, or of the materials of which the world is composed; but as to his mind, conscience, soul, he is held to be a product, not educed from the material, but owning some other origin, or, if a product of the material, yet not destined to return to the material again,—a pro-

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duct rather of the all-creative Spirit, a breath of God, not destined to come and go as the winds, but to exist personally and eternally. It may not be possible to establish this doctrine of the immortality of the soul on rational grounds, or by reasonings satisfactory to the demands of demonstration ; but from the whole history of redemption as revealed, we must adopt the conclusion that he is not altogether absorbed into the sum of material things at death, but that there is a seed, a germ of immortality which springs up out of the very grave itself, that there is a finer essence evolved from this material being, that our personality is not dissipated by death, nor is our consciousness destroyed. Of this truth the King appears to have had a glimpse when he distinguishes the spirit of the man that goeth upward, from the spirit of the beast which goeth downward.

MAN AND NATURE ALIKE IN LABOUR.

A second correspondence which he observed between man and the elements of things was in labour. Man taketh labour, and all things are full of labour. This also is rather a poetical coincidence than a deep philosophical observation. The facts of the resemblance are patent to every eye. All the things around us are in a state of motion. The

earth, as a whole, careers through the sky in its appointed orbit; the tides are ever swelling and depressing the waters of the sea; the winds are ever agitating them; the heat is ever causing them to change places relatively, and is also ever drawing them up in vapour and mist, which by their comparative lightness are carried by the winds over continents and islands, till, being condensed by the cold with which they come into contact, they fall in genial rains or chilling snows or destructive hailstorms. Then coming down to earth, we see the waters wearing away the stones and the soil from the sides of the hills, and filling up the valleys and the mouths of rivers. The central heat—the fires of the earth—are also exerting their elevative power, so that here we find whole continents being elevated, rising above the former tide-marks, as other places are depressed beneath them. In the depths of ocean, also, myriads of insects are building up the reefs which are to constitute the foundations of future islands. Earthquakes and volcanoes are doing their work of changing the forms of things. These laborious changes are esteemed the counterpart of the great changes which man produces on the surface of the earth. He is esteemed but as a portion of the great gang of natural agencies which are with immense labour changing the order of

things. It should be observed, however, that his agency is of a totally different kind from that by which these inanimate objects are urged forward. His is voluntary, theirs is involuntary ; his is labour proper, theirs is only motion. A great Being overrules and guides all man's actions as well as the material activities. But this Being has delegated to man an agency proper, and has associated him with Himself in carrying out His purposes ; while in the other He has located only blind forces. Man consciously beholds, and plans, and works ; but matter is subjected to laws of impulsion, by which it is shaped and moved. We do not agree with that view of man's nature which holds that his will is only a shadow, and that his free agency is only a deceitful illusion. We grant that his actions are produced by motives, and yet we hold that he makes a really voluntary choice in the performance of them. And in this voluntary election to do or not to do, is to be found the necessary basis of responsibility, and the righteousness of rewards and punishments, and the assurance of a continuous being in which these rewards and punishments are to take effect. But if we merely place man with all his labours in the same class with the other labouring agencies of the world, if we consider him as subject to the same blind and necessary obedience to the

forces of nature, we cannot rescue him from the same changes and fatalities by which the air and waters are reduced to new form, by which personal identity is utterly lost, and by which he is dissipated by the hand of death. Mind, then, would be nothing but a phase of matter; consciousness but a passing cloud; identity no longer a reality; and the immortality of the soul a figment. But this is not the view which as Christians, looking to the promises of Jesus, to His resurrection and ascension, we are compelled to take. We are responsible immortal beings, and in the great panorama of existence we simply appear on the theatre of time not to become henceforth non-existent, but to reappear in the future, glorious or degraded, according as we have used or abused that trust which God has given us in the performance of those labours to which we have been called under the sun. It may have suited Solomon's materialistic conceptions to class man's labour with the motion of matter, but we are bound, in the Christian view, to enter our caveat, 'Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!'

There is much, indeed, of man's labour which springs from material impulses and subserves only material ends. All his labour for food, for clothing, for shelter, is the result of wants, material wants, but yet that impulse is directed by mind, intelligent

forethought—an element not belonging to the labour of the waters and the winds. There is also recognised in man's labour another element. It is that which we mean when we say 'Ought,' 'You Ought,' 'You Owe it.' The owing—that which is duty and which is a great impeller of man in the performance of the various labours which he undertakes under the sun. Why does that man labour? Because he ought, or he owes it to himself, to his family, to society, to posterity. Surely this element should be noted when we go to compare man's labour with the labour of the ocean and wind. And in these two elements—the element of intelligence and the element of duty—let us ever see the immense superiority of the labours of man over all the blind forces of nature which are continuously operating in the world, in his thinking and moral resolve; and in these elements, too, let us not fail to discover the proper basis of immortality, the qualities which make the spirit of the man to go upward, while the spirit of the beast goes downward.

Another remark which Solomon made was, that these changes resulted in nothing new. He thought there was not anything of which it might be said, Lo, this is new! To a large extent he was correct. Still, we will require not to be carried away by assertions true in one sense, but false in others.

ON THE USE OF THE WORD 'NEW.'

One of the chief causes of disputations among men is the use of words in different and confused senses. The word NEW has different senses. You say of the article of dress or furniture it is new, when it has received the last touch of the workman, and has not been subjected to wear. But a philosopher or a captious person may say, You call that new? No, this part of it grew in the woods, that other on the back of the animal; and before the wood was, or before the wool was, that which forms the wood and the wool existed from time immemorial. So how can you call it new? It may be replied, But the article, whatever it is, has been produced in a different form; the various elements have been combined in new relations, and therefore it is properly denominated *new*. But our philosopher or captious debater says, No, the form even is not new, for there are many things of the same form. You say, There is a new chair; but neither are the elements which compose the chair new, nor is the form of the chair new, for there are thousands of others like it. How is it then new? You still, however, notwithstanding this demonstration, insist that there are things which may with propriety be denominated new. No, not now-a-days, says the

strict disciple of Solomon. That which we call discovery is only, as it were, the exhumation of things which, having been well known, are somehow absorbed into the sum of matters; and now, by some curious turn, they have been thrown out again. All these changes of the ebbing and flowing of the tides, of the variation of the winds, of the inventions of men, are *only* changes—nothing new. There is nothing new under the sun.

PROGRESS.

Now we affirm, that while all the changes which occur in nature are by the operation of the same laws, yet that there has been progress made in matter taking on itself higher forms; or rather, God, by fixed principles of action, is ever producing a higher and nobler set of objects. If any one says, All things continue as they were since the creation, we say, No, they do not. We have satisfactory evidence that the world of matter has gone through different stages of development. We have satisfactory evidence that at one period of its history neither man nor any of the present tribes of animals, nor even trees, were the same as those which are now to be found. There was once a time when gigantic ferns and palm-like trees covered the main portion of the surface of the earth. We have evidence

that at one time great reptiles were its chief inhabitants. We know that we find the skeletons of many tribes of animals now extinct, of animals which required other conditions for life than those which now obtain on the portion of the earth where they are found, and conditions in which the present inhabitants could not exist. The fact is, God has been continually creating plants and animals on the earth suitable to its various progressive stages of development. So that while we may with certainty affirm that the laws of matter are the same now as ever they were, it is also to be affirmed that at various points of time God has interposed to bring upon the stage of existence new and higher orders of things—new things under the sun, though Solomon failed to discover that it was so.

IS THERE NEW DISCOVERY ?

But let us see how the affirmation of Solomon will stand with regard to the period of man's existence on the world. Is it indeed the fact that he, in later periods, has discovered nothing that was not originally taught him ; or has no succeeding generation been wiser—knowing more, becoming stronger, effecting more than any of its predecessors ? Is all that which we call invention and

discovery but a repetition of some previously known and forgotten thing?

It is no doubt true that a great deal of that which passes for new, and which may be announced as grand discovery, is only a resuscitation of the forgotten. The great works which former ages have left, show that some of the mechanical principles which have been considered the discoveries of modern ages must have been known thousands of years since. Painting, sculpture, architecture, have long since, we might say, ceased to be original arts. Medicine probably has added but little that is new to the pharmacopœia of former days. Yet still we are of opinion, that if we compare the state of knowledge, science, and art, as they existed in the time of Solomon, with their condition now, we must come to the conclusion that there are various things which would strike even an acute observer like Solomon as new. We are accustomed to speak of the steam-engine, the rail, the electric telegraph, and such like inventions, as new; and we believe they are new things. Steam, indeed, is not new, but its application to motion is. Electricity is not new, but its application to useful purposes is. The steamship is new. The science of modern astronomy is new; and positive science is, as a whole, new. There has been progress made. No

doubt many good old inventions have been forgotten, and probably the world was on the whole quite as enjoyable in former days as it is now; but that is not the point in dispute. We hold that there is such a thing as novelty, and that there are novelties in all ages worth seeing. The age of bronze was an improvement as well as a change from the age of stone; and the age of iron was different from, and superior to, either. And though it might be said that the same turmoils, and wars, and strifes for life were observable in each, yet would it not be correct to affirm that the same characters belonged to each, and that there was nothing new.

SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS SEES NO PROGRESS.

A view which only ranges over a few years or a few centuries, especially when combined with a fastidious taste, extravagant ideas of personal importance, and an appetite jaded with enjoyment, is very likely, in its critical analysis of things, to find repetition everywhere, novelty nowhere. It is true, Nature repeats herself: the same snows of winter, the same suns in summer. What is spring but the fresh garment woven out of the decayed clothing of the last year,—the old coat furbished up by the patent process which has been in existence since

the beginning? The grass and the grain are both there, having only changed places. The strong men have become old, the youths have sprung into manhood, and fresh troops of children have taken the place of those who begin to put on looks of staidness and business-like importance. The spring, summer, fall, and winter of human life are ever repeating themselves. Times of war succeed times of peace. We talk of new systems of education, new doctrines of faith. The critical, fastidious eye looks through all, and sees sameness in all; yet, if we mistake not, amid the sameness there is something that is new—it is not all monotony. The discordant, creaking sounds of the great world-instrument have among them some new tones. The barbaric periods are not merely repeated in the civilised ages. The civilisations of Judea, of Greece and Rome, are not exactly the civilisations of England and France. Christianity, though based on Judaism, has a spirit of its own. The spirit of Christ is surely not the same as the spirit of Solomon. The Son of David has a kingdom better ordered than that of David. True it is that it is rent into pieces, that it is in practical captivity, that it subserves very partially the intention of its Founder; but yet, even in its external aspects, it is an improvement on the old Temple-religion. Let

us trace, if we will, the resemblance between the priests of Judea and the priests of modern times ; let us assert that Pharisaism is as rampant now as it was in Jerusalem ; that political virtue is bought now, as it was when, in the holy city, offices, civil and religious, were purchased by unscrupulous men. When we have exhibited the lines of correspondence, there will still be found some marks, we would hope, of superiority and advancement. We are unwilling to believe that under the government of God there is no progress being made, that Satan is still as powerful as ever, and that there is no hope of a still further advancement. That things are as bad as ever, is the Devil's gospel. It is not surely an Ixion's labour, this continual work of generations of men, without profit and without progress. Apart from the consideration that men enjoy their labours—that they are not mere slaves, but that with a hearty good-will they work, and find in the very work itself fruit ; apart also from the further consideration that they are being prepared for a higher grade of life, and that out of this world they proceed to another higher state,—we do think we may affirm of the world itself, with its plenty, its liberty, its prospects of peace, its better understood principles of morality, and its purer faith, that it is certainly becoming a better, more enjoyable place, than it was

in days gone by. Famines now are far more rare. With our means of locomotion, and with the spirit of benevolence, but small suffering arises now from want of food. Nations are being born to liberty in a day. Russia has emancipated her slaves, and 20,000,000 of chattels have become free men. Italy, so long debased and tyrannized over, is once more almost a kingdom. Slavery has ceased to exist over the whole United States. War is now conducted upon principles of mercy unknown to ancient times. The whole world is also being more and more leavened with the principles of Christian truth, and justice, and mercy. While, at the same time, we know that the means whereby man lives and enjoys are enlarged, and brought within the reach of large bodies of the people. No, no! Looking on our age as a whole, we are convinced that it is not as Solomon would have us to believe, and as critical pleasure-seeking philosophers of our own time would have us to think—a mere repetition of the past. There are new elements introduced into it since Solomon's time. It has made great advances; and we would not wish to go back to the times of Israel's King, even for the purpose of seeing Solomon arrayed in all his glory, hearing his words of wisdom, and seeing all his mighty works, or living under his despotic authority.

OBLIVION.

The statement, too, that oblivion covers all, is in a large measure to be conceded. There is no remembrance of anything. Still there is such a thing as history. The statement looks to the desire which man has for remembrance in the world which he has inhabited and caused to resound with his deeds, and to the weakness of the means by which he tries to perpetuate that memory. As to the desire for continued remembrance, we may remark that it exists with all, and is especially strong in those who have held a high position in the eye of the world. It is not alone to be found in the bosom of conquerors, or other great men. It is universal. We would like that at least our little world should not soon forget us. The city or the town where we have lived and acted, we would be glad to think, when we have arrived at the gate of death, should still remember us, or if they do not, from our obscure position, think of us, still we hope the select circle of our relatives and friends will long speak of us with kindly reminiscences. We feel, however, that but a very short time will elapse till we and our deeds are forgotten. It has been so with others, it will be so with us. A few more years,

and all who knew us will themselves have followed, and none will be left behind to recall our familiar faces, or mention our names with bated breath, or speak of us with kindly recollections. We may have some stone on which our names being engraven, with perhaps an epitaph, will tell in the city of the dead to the passing stranger, that once 'there lived a man.' Perhaps a century, or even longer, may elapse ere the stone has crumbled or fallen, but the time will come when there will be of us no remembrance. A few prominent or gifted ones so happy as to found a family, may be spoken of by their remote descendants as the first of their family. Some sons of genius may embalm their names in history, and remote scholars may admire the talent which blazed across the world and then was quenched by death. Solomon yet lives, and the remembrance of him in some degree contradicts his assertion that there is no such thing. Still it is very true what he says, that of the vast masses of our race there is no remembrance. They have lived and enjoyed, and wept, and wrestled, and died, and now it seems as though they had never been; and it does not appear—for this is the amount of the reflection of the wise man—that any benefit has arisen either to the individual or to the world from that existence which he led on earth. It would have been different, he

seems to think, could he have made his name perpetual, though of what advantage that is in reality, it is hard to see. It is one of the desires, however, implanted in the human heart, and for wise purposes; for if it were not there, mankind would be much less careful of how they act while they are in this world. It may be questioned whether the desire for the good opinion of our fellow-men in life and at death be not more conducive to right living than any view to a future judgment of God. With those who disbelieve in a future state it will be the great motive impelling to right living, apart from the beauty and excellence of its rectitude, and we cannot too much cultivate the feeling. We may not do anything to make us long remembered; we may not have bestowed on us any great brilliancy of talent or splendour of genius; but all of us have had a sphere of activity given us in which we may win the good opinion or execration of our fellow-men; and certainly, at the period of our departure, though we may have nothing to boast of before God, we may have something for which we may be approved by man. By the law of perfection we may have sinned and come far short of the glory of God, but by the law of man's opinion we may stand in an exalted position.

SUMMARY.

Without, then, annoying ourselves with any desponding views of the uselessness of the labours to which, in companionship with the waves of the sea, and the winds, and the rivers, and the universal motion of things, we are called, let us rather rejoice in that activity, and fulfil the great end allotted to us, though we may not clearly comprehend what it is; remembering still, however, that though in this world the record of our deeds may be very imperfect, and, like our footprints on the sand, to be obliterated by the next tide that flows, the deeds themselves shall reappear, and we with them. After this fitful, feverish, eventful life is closed—after death has sealed our eyes, and friends have consigned us to the tomb—after the stone that records our name has crumbled in decay—after all who ever may yet syllable our name have followed us in death—after the other generations of men have all stamped their way across this field of life out of the darkness of non-existence into the land of substantiality,—we, spiritual beings, still existent, still sentient, still personal, shall meet with, and find, a reward in all that we have done under the sun. Our works do follow us. The material things shall crumble in the dust. The temple, the estate, the money, the fame, all go to

the oblivion of earthly things, but nothing ever dies, no deed is left without its record, no work without its reward. Up they come, those shadows, those realities, those cruelties, those kindnesses, those labours, those neglects,—up they come, not as separate existences, so much as all embodied in our own living spirits, deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. Every one of them having a place in the person, just as the essence of our food and drink becomes part of our living frame, so they have become the warp and woof of our never-dying being. Yes, think this, your labours are all entering into the very constitution of your eternal being. The memory of them, the reality of them, has taken up a place in it—is part of your very soul; so that that declaration will be found to contain a despairful, hopeful truth, ‘He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still;’ a declaration, a warning of that God who desireth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he would turn unto Him and live.

VI.

WISDOM, MADNESS, AND FOLLY.

'And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly.'—ECCLES. I. 17.

'And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness.'—ECCLES. II. 12-14.

WISDOM, madness, and folly are the three heads under which Solomon sums up the actions of men. In his vocabulary wisdom is not mere knowledge, but a certain just appreciation of it; folly also does not exclude knowledge, but may be viewed as a practical misapplication of it, while madness is a direct inversion of it. Wisdom deals with things in their proper relations as causes and effects; folly often scorns the consideration of these, except for the immediate results; but madness has a total disregard for results, either near or remote. Madness with the wise man is not what we call insanity proper, where reason is unseated and lunacy is triumphant. The best way to understand his

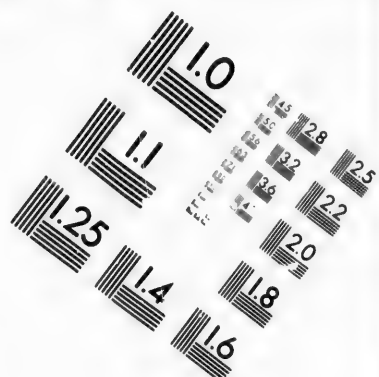
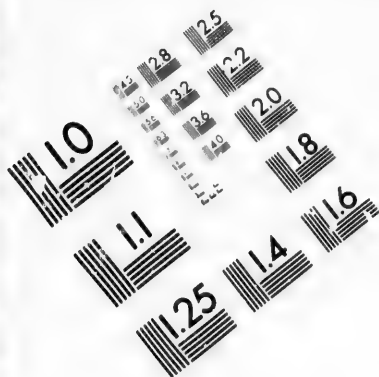
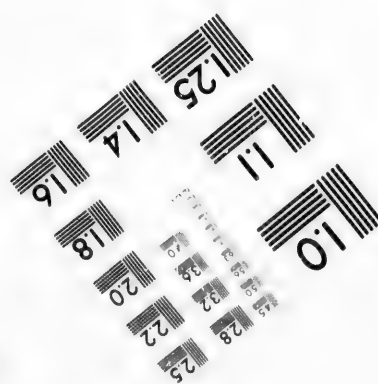
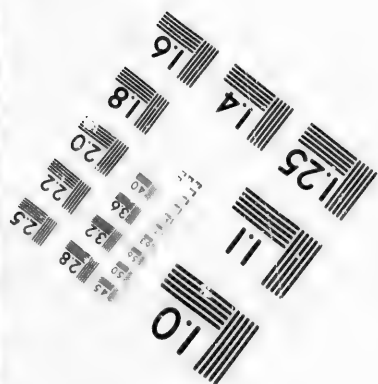
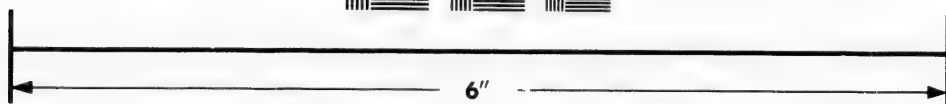
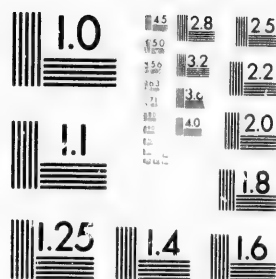


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meaning, is to take three classes or types of men. Here is one who studies subjects with a view always to extract out of them, not some transient pleasure, but substantial and useful results. He makes that the main end of all that he does. He ploughs, and sows, and reaps, with due observance of the seasons ; he never misses an opportunity to increase his wealth, to secure his health, to procure the mean of permanent enjoyment. All his studies have relation to the practical, the useful, the permanent. Then the fool is one who does not calculate, who looks only to present enjoyment, whose actions are not squared by any just rule or measure ; but the madman outrages every principle of reason and common sense. We might say of Solomon, that he was wise while he studied, and in due measure planted, builded, and made beautiful the garden and forest ; that he acted the fool when he entered on his dissipation ; and that madness characterized his proceedings when he, to please his wives, built the temples of his false gods. No doubt, in all this procedure, however foolish or vain, he might still lay claim to the character of the wise man, as in all that he did he was professedly making experiments in that which was good for man. In his folly he was not a fool like those with whom he associated. He held himself above them, even when he put himself on an equality

with them. He not only turned himself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly, but he proved them by trying what satisfaction they would bring. It is but fair to the monarch to remember that the attainment of wisdom was the object of his folly and madness,—a dangerous experiment, and one out of which he did not come unscathed. Though a king, and wise, he suffered sadly, in his character, and in his kingdom. It is on record that his wives turned away his heart from God, and that for his apostasies, enemies were raised up to trouble him in life, and the kingdom was rent under his son after his death. Experiments of this kind should never be made. Plausible excuses may be urged by every one for vices and errors. 'To see life' is thought to be necessary. 'To know the world' is considered an excuse for a criminal career. It is possible to seclude ourselves too much from the view of those things which are of questionable character. We may grow up ignorant of much that is evil, and which it yet concerns us to know, and yet which it would be ruinous to our moral nature to come into close contact with. There is a middle path. It is that indicated in two descriptions of Solomon's conduct relative to those dangerous things. He says he turned himself to *behold* wisdom, madness, and folly. Quite right. Sin, folly, vice, crime, are all

appropriate subjects of study. We cannot know man without knowing them, and we cannot conduct ourselves towards man properly without knowing them ; but when we make them not only subjects of observation, but matters of practice, even though for the purpose of knowing them more intimately, we are eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, which will issue in our expulsion from the Eden of happiness. This Solomon appears to have done, by his own admission, when he says that he gave his heart to know, not wisdom alone, but madness and folly, withholding not his heart from any joy. Those who do this, even for the avowed purpose of enlarging their experimental knowledge, will certainly not escape unhurt. ' Can a man take coals into his bosom and not be burned ? ' No more can he taste of the tree of forbidden pleasure, and not suffer the evil consequences of its poisonous taste.

SEEING LIFE.

When a young man commences his career, if he have been previously untarnished, his character perfectly bright, his moral principles upright, truthful, pure, in better moments he scorns the thought of tasting the mixed wines which unlawful pleasures tempt him with. Direct allurements have no power over his resolution to keep himself unspotted from

the world's vices. But suppose the temptation comes in this form, from the lips of companions, or the suggestion of his own thoughts: 'You cannot know what the world is—you are really up to a certain point ignorant, a butt for ridicule—if you do not participate in those enjoyments, those gay revels, in which youth generally indulge. Why, if you only want to know the evils of their ways, you must indulge in them a little of course. You will be able to preach all the better against them.' There is something in all this very plausible, and, I have no doubt, aided by the corrupt nature that is in all such argument, fallacious as it is, has been sufficient to draw many a young person away from the path of virtue. I can fancy a young man of the best nature, and disposition, and training, suffering himself to be imposed upon with this reasoning. He just wishes to know a little of their ways, that he may not be esteemed altogether a fool by the mad ones with whom the business of life brings him into contact. But he by no means intends to practise them, or allow himself to be drawn away by them. If he have a strong moral nature, if he be surrounded by virtuous guards, he may be saved from the formation of habits of sin, though he has actually ventured within the charmed region, in which many strong men have been, like the crew of Ulysses,

converted into beasts by the cups of Circe. The experiment is not only dangerous ; it is, in the most favourable case, detrimental. The first debauch is, to a man's moral nature, like dragging a new garment through the mire. All the brushing and polishing in the world will never make it clean again.

But many who make the experiment do not stop with the experiment. They feel that they are hurt by it, yet they are willing to make it evermore. The fisherman knows that even the touch of the sharp hook only whets the appetite of the silly trout. So is it with the bait of unlawful pleasures. If the man be not taken at once by them, even though he have already experienced their sharp fangs, he will yet return to them. The headache too often fails to prevent the recurrence of the debauch ; and the sting which conscience inflicts is forgotten in the presence of the subsequent temptation.

Bad habits are bound upon the man by numberless repetitions, which are like so many threads, each one of little force, but together like sevenfold cords, which require the force of Samson to break. There are not many Samsons either. And many a strong young man—strong in moral power, strong in high resolves—gets his locks shorn, and becomes weak as other men, when Delilah has taken hold of his fancy. So that even experimental pleasures are

dangerous. This Solomon found out to his cost, when learning wisdom he turned to make experiments in madness and folly.

Turn yourselves, then, as much as ye will to study these things. Study wisdom, and practise it; but study madness and folly only to avoid them. And take the experience of Solomon; take the warning example of the many whom you have seen in your own day and neighbourhood destroyed by the insidious operation of folly and madness. The decision of Solomon—for his decisions, ultimate decisions, are generally wise—is, that wisdom excelleth folly as much as light excelleth darkness.

WISDOM HAS ITS EYES IN ITS HEAD.

The particular in which wisdom excelleth folly is, says Solomon: 'The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness.'

This gives us a view of the superior value of wisdom over folly. The one is an eye, the other is blindness. A general view of all things necessary for man to know is before the wise man. Only those things which are near, in contact with his person, are in any respect known by the fool. The wise man sees all that is within the wide horizon, having his eyes in his head; but the fool is a blind

man, who goes about with his eyes in his stomach, or some other sensual part of his nature. The wise man's eyes instruct his intellect; but the fool's eyes only seem to be fit to give him information regarding the quality of meat and drink, or some present enjoyment. The wise man's actions are subjects of calculation; the fool lives at random. The wise man, having his eyes in his head, has discovered that there is a God who rules and judges; that there is a wide distinction between virtue and vice; that the way of the righteous shall be established, but that the way of the ungodly shall perish; that present pleasure in the ways of vice are a poor purchase for future retributive pain. The fool being blind, rather having shut his eyes to the reality of things, hath said in his heart, There is no God. Virtue and vice are mere names without distinction in the nature of things: he pleases himself with the eminently vain idea that wickedness shall be as successful as righteousness, and that he may with impunity violate the moral principles of his nature. The wise man with his eyes in his head has come to right decisions; the fool, from natural defect or from shutting his, has come to false conclusions. We have only to look to the world around us, to see that this is so.

EXPLANATION.

The only explanation which can be given why men, so many of them, rush on in folly to ruin, is that they have blinded themselves, for the illustrations of the evils of certain vicious courses are everywhere. There is no young man, who, if he did not allow his passions to blind the eyes of his understanding, but must see that those ways which are justly called wicked, are also ruinous. Here, then, are three things which we should look at: 1st, The fool is justly called a fool who does not see the consequences of his acts; 2d, He does not see them because he will not; and 3d, He is a mentally inferior specimen of humanity when compared with the wise man. Regarding the first of these positions, we need not observe almost anything save this, that a man who does not look at the natural consequences of any course of conduct, or looking does not see them to a large extent, is, properly speaking, a fool. People call him a fool. If he is in business, and acts without any ~~first~~ calculation of the various elements which are necessary to ensure success, he is among business men a fool. If he enter on a course of dissipation, by which, on a fair review of the examples within his reach, we might justly conclude he will in a few years be brought to ruin, his

body a wreck, and his soul a miserable thing to which vices cling, what can he be called but a fool? If with the knowledge of the fact that but few of those who try to swindle succeed, while ruin comes from detection, is he not a fool who tries it? The mental pain and the moral detriment are plainly in their elements visible to the eye of introspection, were they not so largely insisted on by mental and moral observers, and were the workings of the soul oppressed with crime not fully portrayed in writings sacred and profane. How, then, does it come that, with all the light of knowledge, so many pursue the ruinous course,—why so many who have been unsuccessful, so many dissipated, so many sensual, and wretched? Why, because they did not carry their eyes in their head, they did not see, they were blind. But why were they blind? Naturally, or by some fault of their own? Probably both. We may here observe, that as a man may destroy his eyes, so may he destroy or weaken the eyes of his understanding; but it is far more common to weaken the vision of reason than the vision of the eye. No doubt there are those who are born blind in understanding as well as of eye. These are to be pitied. But for every one who is thus born with mental vision defective, thousands, from the very beginning of life, seem to have no other object in

view than to destroy their mental capacities, at least so far as to distinguish moral subjects. Their great object is to get their reason into such a state that it will justify them in calling good evil, and evil good; sweet bitter, and bitter sweet. The education which many receive from their infancy is calculated to destroy all mental vision. The examples they see, and the precepts they are taught, are alike bad. One hardly knows what reverence is due to wicked parents. We would say that even children are under no obligations to allow their minds to be blinded by the acts and opinions of vicious parents, by any positive command; and when respect for them and respect for virtue are opposed, let the higher law operate and the lower in the letter give way. Unfortunately, however, the vicious and the wicked instruction is all the more likely to be listened to, as there is in us a natural inclination to the evil. In too many cases we are perfectly willing to have our eyes blinded. We want arguments to make us easy in the pursuit of the courses in which we wish to indulge. If true arguments fail us, we press in witticisms to supply their room. Sophistry, which is on the side of inclination, is ever more powerful than reason, which is against it. Every moral sophistry may be viewed as a thin film which covers the eye of the

understanding, while true reason is a cure which would enable us to discover with exactitude the relations and differences of truth and error. But how few want to be taught that which is really true and false, good and bad! Most men want rather something which will enable them to set at defiance the outcries which conscience makes against the evil courses in which they indulge. They are quite willing that the eyes of the understanding should be blinded, that they should not come to the knowledge of the truth. My way, they say, the way in which I wish to walk, to which inclination leads, and in which passion drives, lies through plotting and scheming, through sensuality and debauchery, and I want something to make me comfortable in it, not anything which will spoil my joy and check my vivacity. You would think it strange that any man should voluntarily consent to have his eyes put out, or to have them dimmed so that he could only see at the distance of a yard or two; but it is by no means strange—it is, on the contrary, a thing of everyday occurrence—to find men consenting to have their understanding dimmed so that all moral subjects shall be indistinct. Probably, however, this is mostly consented to on the plea of getting greater enlargement of vision. Yes, this is the plea. There are thousands of moral quack

oculists in the world, who profess to give extended range of vision, so extended as that all distinctions of virtue and vice are obliterated. God is beheld vanishing from the world, and man—not the immortal, but he of the threescore and ten years—the god of individual worship. This is surely an extension of vision! We shall not now enter the lists with these opinions. We believe them to be utterly fallacious; we believe that he who has come to see the world without a God, without duty and sin, and temporary being as the only hope of man, has had the eyes taken out of his head, and is to all intents a fool, groping along in darkness.

IGNORANCE OF NATURAL LAWS.

Yet, on the other hand, we see a great many persons, who, while clear on the great landmarks of virtue, are yet voluntarily blind in regard to the great laws of the universe in which they dwell. They are ignorant of the principles of science, of commerce, of the minor morals, on which much of the comfort of life depends. They believe in God, but, from false notions of the natural laws by which His providence is carried forward, they live in terror of Him as a capricious tyrant, not in love of Him as a Father. In olden times, people were frightened by an eclipse. Thunder to them was the voice of

God's wrath, and the lightning the terrific glance of His angry eye. The wise man knows that these are beneficent arrangements of His eternal foresight and care. Fools, even now, forgetting, ignoring the great principles of demand and supply, and urged on to extravagant competition by the selfish principle of gain, bring judgments upon themselves; and other fools conduct themselves in family and social relationships, so that peace flies from the house, the country, and the kingdom. Many kings who are called to rule, seem to have no eyes except for their self-aggrandizement and self-gratifying purposes. Politicians, who ought to be the most far-seeing among men, voluntarily blind themselves to the true interests of those whom they profess to serve by their government, and can only see how to elevate themselves and found families, while the interests of the nation go to ruin; while people in general seem to have forgotten that it is by individual righteousness that the well-being of nations is established. They are all, in the midst of much light, voluntarily blind to that which God would have them to see. The proper description of them is, that they are groping about in the dark. The circle of selfishness rises up, and, like a wall that reaches to heaven, prevents them from beholding what true wisdom would teach them. They may profess to see God, but in works

they deny Him ; to see virtue, but prefer only some of its more self-looking duties ; to live for immortality, and yet they are guided wholly by the present aspect of things. In a word, I fear we are all liable, more or less, to the charge of folly in its most undeniable lineaments and terms, and that we have ourselves much to blame for having blinded our eyes to the true distinction of things.

We may for a moment just refer to slavery as one of those things in which we can best see how it is possible to blind the eye to that which is just, true, and wise. We do not need to argue that slavery is a crime, a blunder, a folly. Upon that question we may say the whole civilised world has given its verdict. England knows this ; France knows it, so does Austria ; and the Russian autocrat was so convinced of it, that he set free his 20,000,000 of serfs—made them rise to the dignity of men—the greatest act, the noblest achievement of modern times. All the world knows the criminality, the guilt, the folly of slaveholding, save the slaveholders themselves, or the bondholders on slave property. All the civilised world were convinced that slaveholders had their moral sense blinded by self-interest in this matter. They knew that all those gentle terms, such as ‘the peculiar institution,’ the ‘domestic institution,’ and the foul names with which

those were greeted who disapproved of the system, were inventions to conceal from the view of the slaveholders the positive iniquity of the system. Now we believe that the greater portion of those who have been slaveholders were perfectly convinced that there was nothing morally wrong in slavery. They were quite conscientious in believing that what all the world, not selfishly interested, held to be wrong and foolish, was yet right and wise. I bring this forward as an example of the blinding nature of self-interest, or rather greed. But with this example before us, may it not be very fairly affirmed that greed produces moral blindness nearer home? We look to France, and we see in the restless, uneasy, warlike disposition of that people, their fondness for glory and extension of territory, the characteristics of great folly. Is it not also quite likely that, in our social system, there is much that is both wicked and foolish, though self-interest will not let us see it? Slaveholders have pointed to the miseries which obtained to an even greater extent in manufacturing England, as an offset against the evils of slavery, and said, 'Physician, heal thyself.' And I daresay, among ourselves there are many legalized evils which we are unwilling to acknowledge as such, because our selfish interests are involved in upholding them. In private life, without doubt,

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men can perpetrate crimes and commit follies without seeing that they are such, because they are interested — pecuniarily, at least we think so — in them. In every smaller circle there is also a recognised code of morals of a lower grade than that which finds public acknowledgment. Gentlemen, as a certain class call themselves, though they may have small claims to the title, have their peculiar notions of what is wise, and right, and honourable to do.

Then there is the commercial code of the bulls and bears of the Stockmarket, the code of the Shopkeeper, etc. ;—all of them founded on some principle of rottenness, but believed by the blinded fools to be quite sound, or at least excusable and justifiable. They all have this character of the fool, that they walk in darkness ; and the description of the Psalmist is perfectly applicable to them :

‘ Because himself he flattereth
In his own blinded eye,
Until the hatefulness be found
Of his iniquity.’

We have been so long now dealing with fools, and finding them everywhere, that we may have forgotten what wisdom is. We want some model with which to compare these fools of dissipation, politics, commerce, gentility, and so forth.

THE WISE MAN—WHERE ?

But where shall we find such a one. It may not be said of any one man, See, here is the perfectly wise. All have their faults and their follies. Not in Solomon himself,—not in David, who, though less gifted with knowledge than Solomon, may yet be esteemed more practically wise than the son, a man more after God's own heart. In the absence of any merely human model of wisdom, we might with much propriety set before us the character of the man who is truly blessed, as found in the 1st Psalm; for surely the man whose course leads to true blessedness is the truly wise: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of his God; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

The truly wise man is one who knows the law of his God, and who walks in it day and night; who hears ever the voice of God saying unto him, This is the way, walk ye in it. And we may say this law of God is that written on the heart, written in Numbers, written in Revelations. He who strives with

all his might to know and to keep all the laws which God has given for the regulation of his being, physical, mental, moral, in all the relations of life, is a good student of the heavenly wisdom, and, in as far as he has attained to his aims, is wise. Nor are we to exclude from our consideration the law of faith, by which he, a participator of the divine grace, enters into communion and fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

Is it necessary to consider for a moment the truth of Solomon's affirmation, 'That wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness,'—that the wise man according to the law of his God is as superior to the fool who transgresses it, either from ignorance or through turpitude of nature, as the man who sees is superior to the blind for all the purposes of life,—or to doubt those passages in which Solomon described the superiority of wisdom over folly? These passages, however, have their value, and we may with profit rehearse them. 'Wisdom,' saith he, 'is good with an inheritance; and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men that are in the city. A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine. Wisdom is better than strength and weapons of war. The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.' There is value in wis-

dom to those that come after us, value in it for present ability, value for beauty and ornament, and value in it, for it gives life, it preserves from the way of death, and secures the life everlasting.

GLIMPSES OF IMMORTALITY.

Still we do not say that Solomon had the life everlasting in his view. Whatever glimpses he had of the life to come, we think that, while pursuing his career of investigation respecting the good that man should do under the sun, he had very little thought of the immortality that awaits the soul. Probably, in writing the book, he intelligently touched on that truth when he made the distinction between the spirit of the man and that of the beast; probably also he had a glimpse of it when, in the conclusion of that beautiful passage descriptive of old age, he describes the spirit returning to God who gave it: still there is nothing in either of these passages which absolutely proves that the writer affirmed the immortality of the soul. At any rate, we have a sad doubt thrown over his views on this subject, in the verses which we are just now considering. What is the meaning of the following verses, if through wisdom a man might attain to immortality? 'I,' says he, 'myself perceived also that one event happeneth to all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth

even to me ; and why was I then more wise ? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever ; seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten : and how dieth the wise man ? even as the fool.' Why does Solomon complain that wisdom cannot keep him living, nor preserve his remembrance ? Why does he affirm, that though with'in the boundaries of the world wisdom is good, yet its value seems to end then, if he thought that through all eternity he would shine as the brightness of the firmament ? In reading this passage, the sickening thought presses in on the mind, that Solomon at least had no distinct or positive faith in the immortality of the soul, that his wisdom was of a worldly kind, and that he was without that definite hope which cheers the Christian on life's journey through this world, which, amid all the clamours and turmoils of life, sings him sweet songs, which has a word of comfort for the severest trials, and sheds its rays over the darkest hour.

VII.

THE SENSUAL PHILOSOPHY.

'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? For God giveth to a man that is good in His sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner He giveth travail, to gather, and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.'—ECCLES. II. 24-26.

THE great question, which it is very important we should have resolved for us at or near the beginning of our present life, is, What is that general principle on which our life should proceed, and pursuing which, we shall enjoy the greatest good? or, if the question of good be held to be an inferior consideration, What is that course which man should pursue in accordance with duty and right? Probably it will be found that these two things, as a general rule, are coincident; yet it may be that the motive of right will more surely lead to the possession of good, than the pursuit of good to the doing of right. Both of these aspects of the case presented themselves before the mind of Solomon,

but at different times. Here we have the *good* brought prominently before us ; at the conclusion of the wise man's experiments we have the duty presented, the one by no means necessarily excluding the other ; but from false views of the nature of the good, and false judgments regarding its relation to man, the lower often opposing the higher principle. It is, however, quite possible for us to take, with Solomon, a view of what is good for man, without contradicting or ignoring the nobler principle which is involved in duty. We would therefore inquire, with Solomon, what is that good thing ?

We have Solomon's reply, which needs no explanation. It may, however, need definition ; for in any licence which is given to the sensual side of our nature, there require to be appended the strongest injunctions against licentiousness. I daresay many have thought, in reading these verses, that they just contained the substance of the songs of Anacreon, or other Bacchanalian poets ; and many a jolly good liver may have had his conscience lightened by what, under the biassed interpretation of the animal passions, might seem to be the sentiment of the wise King. We do not think that they fairly bear this interpretation. We rather think, that while Solomon enjoyed, or rather tried to enjoy, life in excess, that is not the purport of his observation here, but

that there is here commended a rational use of all the gifts of the divine providence, without any commendation of excesses.

AGAINST MISERLINESS.

We would here observe that the sentiment of the King is directed against that miserly abuse of labour which consists in laying up riches, accumulating without enjoyment for the sake of accumulation, or with the expectation that by accumulation enjoyment will come after a fixed amount has been reached.

It is not easy always to unravel the motives of those men who act very differently from most others. Here is a man, for instance, who has devoted his life to the accumulation of wealth, and he is now worth an enormous sum—WORTH, that is, possesses, property to an almost fabulous amount. As to personal worthiness, that is quite another question. But he does not enjoy the property or the money. He lives sparsely and meanly; and yet he is as much intent on adding to the original sum as when, standing face to face with hard poverty, he first began to save. You may well ask what are the man's motives for thus hoarding up that which he does not seem to know the use of. We may remark in explanation, that we see in him only the con-

tinuation and extravagant enlargement of a common and wise motive natural to the whole human family,—the desire to make provision for the wants of the future, to lay up for a rainy day, or a sick day, or old age, when incapacitated for work. That desire in him has attained extraordinary and extravagant development, while other desires have been curbed and dwarfed. So he has grown up, needing little, and yet providing for the supply of many needs. So, with the ascetic life of the hermit, he has accumulated sufficient for the wants of princes. Besides this original desire to put himself beyond the reach of want, there is generally added the lust of power which money gives; for money is king of men. They said once cotton was king; but cotton was only one of money's prime ministers. The money-lender is the real king to whom the needy bow. So, in order that this principle of love of power may be gratified, the miser lends for the wants, real or imaginary, of the man of business or the man of pleasure. The miser may have also in view the founding of a name and a family. He wishes to leave to his heir what will enable him to take a place among the great and noble—the greatness of the heir being reflected with glory on him as the founder of a house and family. Now there is really nothing in any of these motives which is radically

wrong. On the contrary, it is quite right and prudent to provide for the wants of the future. It is also fair enough to seek for legitimate influence through the possessions which may have been honestly attained ; and to raise one's family in position and importance is by no means unworthy of the consideration of a wise man. The evil in the motives of the miser lies in the excess to which he allows them to grow, to the dwarfing of other equally important principles of his nature. Whenever the love of money, or of the power which it brings, or of the fame which it confers, stands in the way of the enjoyment of that life which God has given us, not to say contravenes our duty towards God, it becomes an evil. In the text the question is not debated on any higher principle than that of the greatest good ; and on this principle, no doubt, Solomon was right in his conclusion, that it is better that a man should eat and drink, and enjoy the fruit of all his labour,—better than that he should deny himself and lay up, and accumulate riches, which, after all, may serve no good purpose, but which coming, as riches gathered nearly or shabbily, not to say unjustly, generally do, into the hands of foolish heirs, may be all squandered in vice, and instead of adding to the posthumous fame of the gatherer, only hurt his children. Consider, then, that it is wiser

to enjoy the good of labour, than with meanness and carefulness to provide for the generations to come.

AGAINST EXTRAVAGANCE.

But again, let us guard ourselves against the conclusion that a man is to eat and drink, and consume *all* the fruit of his labours. Because a man is not to be a miser, it does not follow that he is to be a spendthrift. Let him enjoy the fruit of his labours by all means, but at the same time let him leave the world as well as, or better than he found it. Let us think of this a little. We all owe a debt to our ancestors, which they require us to pay to posterity. True, there is no written bond which we have signed to that effect, but there are the obligations of nature and justice which require this of us. Our forefathers have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. We believe it was Dr. Franklin who once lent a sum of money to a young man commencing business, with the obligation that he should also do the same, when he became independent, for another worthy but poor young man, with a similar obligation on him to go and do likewise. It may be that this loan is going forward in its operation yet, according to the wishes of him who commenced it; but whether or not, the great commission to every one on entering the world is, that

he also, as he hath received, should communicate. A man has no right to eat and drink and destroy without reference to the world in which he lives, and without a thought of those who are to come after him in the world. The commission to the apostles when they were sent forth, is also given to each of us: 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'

That each man should enjoy the fruit of all his labour, and yet leave the world as well, or even better, are quite compatible. A man plants an orchard, and the fruit is his to enjoy; while the trees themselves are more permanent than he, and may become a legacy for posterity. The proper tillage of the field, while enriching the present possessor, also makes the same field more fertile for the succeeding heir. The house which is built may not merely accommodate him who has erected it, but other tenants, when the grave has become his sole possession. Man's labours are, many of them, more permanent than he is himself. To enjoy them, and yet to carry out consciously the great scheme of divine providence in enriching and beautifying the world, is the part of the wise man. God wants that we should be happy, and that we be the instruments of the happiness of others.

AGAINST EXCESS.

A proper use of the sentiment of this passage demands that we should not apply it to indulgence in excess of any kind. To enjoy the fruit of labour is very different from indulgence in gluttony, drunkenness, riotous living, wantonness, or any intemperance. Any of these things will soon bring both the labours and enjoyments of their votaries to an end. There are diseases which attend what is called good living, not at all in harmony with enjoyment. Health and long life are not to him who too plenteously indulges any appetite, but to the temperate man, who knows how to put a curb on his appetite, and keeps every passion within due bounds. If it can be proved that there is any article used as food, or as a common beverage, which is either not nutritious, or contains the seeds and elements of disease, it certainly is no proper enjoyment of life to partake of it, as, though it may gratify for the moment, it brings misery of a much larger growth, which it will be the part of wisdom to guard against by total abstinence from the subtle deleterious thing. I do not now enter more particularly on questions of diet or drink; only it may be laid down here as an incontrovertible principle, that whatever tends generally to produce a larger amount of misery than

it does of enjoyment in the use, ought to be shunned by every wise man. Let a man only open his eyes, consult his own personal experience, and take a survey of the effects of any habit of eating or drinking, and as he finds the evidence for or against, let his decision and practical conduct be.

FRUIT OF LABOUR MANIFOLD.

The term, 'enjoy the fruit of all his labour,' has a much wider meaning than can be comprehended under the pleasures of the table. There are those, we know, who think good eating and drinking, and the special sociality connected therewith, constitute the chief enjoyments of life. Most people, however, add other pleasures, chiefly sensual; but few, we think, have their eyes sufficiently open to see the chief delights which may be derived from the labours which man undertakes. Every work of art has within it a source of rich enjoyment. It is a casket which contains within it a gladsome jewel. A well-proportioned building, a garden, a farm, a picture, a statue, a piece of music, a poem, a well-turned speech, and a thousand other things in which we see the designing mind of man, constitute the fruits of labour; and he that has the sense will taste and enjoy them. There is no piety, no religion—except deformity be a god—in refusing to

admire and enjoy the things which are orderly and beautiful, even though they be the production of the mind and hand of man. One of the common-places on which moralists and ministers rang the changes during the preceding generation, was 'the evils of luxury.' We rather think the ills which they saw in luxury belonged simply to excesses, of which there are many; and luxury, like everything else, may be carried to excess. It was the custom, however, to affirm that luxury certainly was the precursor and the cause of the downfall of the people who indulged it. It is very true that some of the greatest nations of antiquity have been patrons of luxury, and have also been conquered; but that they were conquered because they enjoyed what may be called luxuries, is by no means apparent. Barbarous people have been conquered who knew nothing of luxuries, and some of the most luxurious living people of the present day are the most invincible. If a nation cease to labour, giving itself over to enjoyment as the sole end of existence, no doubt it is near its ruin; but if it labour, and enjoy the fruit thereof, though in luxuries, that is no evidence that its decay is begun, or that its fall is near. We might ask the question, For what purpose did God make those things which are called luxuries? Was it that they might remain in the

lands which gave them birth, or that by exchange—what we call commerce—they might become the means of enjoyment in distant lands? Inquire again, What is a luxury? Simply that which is dear, and difficult to procure. The very things which with us are articles of necessity, may be luxuries to those from whom we get in exchange our luxuries. Commerce is dependent in great measure on that wicked thing luxury, and the amity of nations also is dependent on commerce. The brotherhood of the world, if it ever become a thing of fact, will be largely indebted to what has suffered so much railing by good, well-intentioned, but rather short-sighted men.

OUR OWN LABOUR TO BE ENJOYED.

We remark that man should not go beyond his own labour for his own eating, drinking, and enjoyment. In those things which are the property of all, and cannot be appropriated by any, he, though his labours may have had no hand in its production, may find as much enjoyment as possible. The fact is, there is but a very small portion of anything that can become the peculiar possession of the individual. A man may buy an estate, and improve his domain, and cultivate his garden, and in their produce he may have a sole claim; but

their beauties are common to all who can appreciate them :

‘ Creation’s heir, the world, the world is mine.’

But then there are certain things which are individual property, and no man has a right to trench upon these. He has a right to the fruit of his own labour, but no more. He has no right to steal, or swindle, or to live beyond his means. The sentiment that the world owes us a living is no doubt true, with certain limitations. It owes us the reward of our labour ; and if we are not able to labour, it owes us the means of sustaining existence. But if any one should indulge in extravagant habits, consuming not only the fruit of his own labour, but the fruits of the labour of others, upon the plea that the world owes him a living, we have to say that the sentiment in this sense is false, and subversive of justice in its foundation. It is a principle which makes thieves, rogues, and vagabonds ; but which must ever be discarded from the code of morals professed by that very worthy, and, we trust, not very uncommon personage—an honest man.

FOOLISH LAWS.

We observe again, that we have no reason to suppose that Solomon intended to make out a selfish

theory of life, though he here specially describes only personal enjoyment. The remark which he had made, no doubt from a wide observation of facts, that riches laid up by the industrious man are too often squandered by his foolish heir, is the key to the whole meaning of his sentiment respecting what is good to do with the earnings of a man's labour. The whole amount of what he says lies in this, that we may be too anxious to accumulate, too anxious for the wealth of our children, our heirs. We may lay up wealth, that they in whom our dearest affections are centred may have ease and enjoyment, and may enter the ranks of gentility, from which the early poverty of our life may have excluded us; but after we have given them the education and culture of genteel society, and means to support their position in the higher circle to which they have mounted, it is still a question whether we have just done the best thing for them. We know from our own experience, that the great majority of those who have thus inherited education and fortune, and have been brought up to the life of what is called high society, have turned out spendthrifts, who dissipated the fortunes which they were heirs to more rapidly than they were amassed. And if the fortune was not dissipated, still it is questionable whether poverty itself would not be preferable to the life

of licentiousness which abundance enables such persons to lead. It is, however, surely quite possible to lay up a fortune for children, and at the same time to train them up to make a wise use of that fortune. And does it not seem that it would even be a better thing than to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all our labour, if, while of course making a rational use of the good gifts of God's providence, men whose riches increase should set themselves with wisdom and ardour to train their children in the way that they should go, in industry, in truthfulness, in sobriety, in chastity, in charity, in piety, in every human and divine nobleness? True, in some cases success might not attend the effort, and many persons are unqualified for making it; but still it should be made, and we should endeavour to qualify ourselves for it, so that if in the good providence of God any of us, even after eating and drinking and enjoying the fruit of all our labour, should find ourselves possessed of fortune, we may not fear for its dissipation by those who are dearest to us in the world. The virtues are not hereditary, except with cultivation. The industry of the parent is not to be found in the child, unless it be made a habit in youth. We need to inculcate truth and principles of right, if we would expect to see them spring up among the young. There are, no doubt, some natures

which do not readily take the mould. They seem naturally virtuous or vicious. Some you can hardly preserve from ruin, others you can hardly spoil. But while the most fertile soil may be overrun with weeds so that it is fit for no good purpose, the most sterile will yield something to earnest cultivation. And we may say that the future character of the children of a family is chiefly dependent on the mother. This is a general observation, and one not among the popular delusions. The state of the family relationship in Solomon's own experience did not provide for the best superintendence on the part of the mothers of his children, and probably he had some forecastings regarding the folly of his heir, taking their rise from the character of the wives he had married. It is not indeed usual to find eminent specimens of royal training, and certainly not in the East. Even England has, within the memory of those yet living, seen princes who were a disgrace to humanity sitting on her throne, which almost tottered beneath them on account of their dissipations and dishonours. The present generation has been more fortunate. The excellence of the present sovereign, who is respected even where royalty is detested, is known to be the result of the careful training of her royal mother, whom the empire yet mourns. And may we not hope that the future

generation shall enjoy an incalculable benefit in the excellent training which every account testifies has been given to the prospective heir to the throne, as well as to his brothers and sisters, by their excellent parents ? With such illustrious examples, we trust the succeeding race of the great nation of which we form a part, shall be found worthy to live and enjoy the best heritage of labour which the past and present generation of the British people have heaped up for their enjoyment. We also have a part in this training. We too are labourers and careful, we too are increasing in wealth. While we enjoy it in that moderation suitable to our nature, and in accordance with the laws of right, we are also bound to see to it that not fools, but wise men and women, are trained up to carry on the great work of civilisation and improvement which God is superintending on the earth.

ONLY THE PRESENT LIFE.

We may still further make the remark—a remark which we have several times made in relation to Solomon's philosophy of life—that he is dealing solely with what is good for the present life. But, in addition to this, it is to be observed that eating, drinking, and enjoyment of the fruits of labour are only to be viewed as means to an end. Why do we eat, drink, and enjoy ? Is it that we may eat,

drink, and enjoy? That would be an impotent conclusion. Some higher motive must animate us, or we can lay claim to no higher title than that of a superior kind of beasts. We have a God to glorify, we have characters to form, we have an immortality to secure. The glory of our God will be best attained, not so much by acts of special worship, such as praise and prayer, though these are necessary, as by becoming ever more like Him. From the high nobility of our nature we have fallen; but, blessed be His name, He has given us a scheme of salvation through which we may rise to the original state. That salvation consists, first, in a proclamation of pardon to the erring and sinful—pardon to the vilest, most degraded, most fallen, through the self-renunciation of the Son of God—a necessary preliminary to that great salvation by which we are saved; and while only a preliminary, yet also a great moving cause of all the after acts and operations of divine grace in the soul, begetting confidence in God; a clearer sense of His love; a view of the divine sonship of man;—clearing up the way to the cheerful and faithful performance of those duties of life, which becoming habitual, conduce to sanctification or holiness,—begetting also love to Him who first loved us, and love to the brethren made like to ourselves in confidence in God and love to Him,

and thus evermore fitting us for a land, it may be, not of rest, but of higher, holier work than this world affords us any conception of. For this we labour, eat, drink, and enjoy the fruit of labour,—not that we may be full and fatted, but that we may become truthful, faithful, loving, earnest for the right, zealous for God, kind, gentle, virtuous, full of good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy; that we may discover God in His works; that we may reveal God, in all His moral attributes of goodness and mercy, and truth and love, to those who are around us, and who shall be after us, the heirs of our labours, as well in virtue and piety as in material wealth.

GENERAL VIEWS.

In reading such statements as those which we have been considering, then, let us free ourselves from the partial view of things which it presents to our conceptions, and ascend to the higher contemplation of the whole, which we should always keep in view. It is not by studying one star that we will gain a knowledge of astronomy, nor by meditating on one fact that we shall become skilled in physical science. The one truth which guides us to a just appreciation of what is best to do in relation to a supposed contingency, is ever to be collated with the other truths which make up the whole

science of life. When we look to the propriety of an enjoyment of the things of this world according to the theory of Solomon, or consider the Son of man as having come eating and drinking, by no means pursuing the ascetic course of His predecessor the Baptist, we are also to remember that the object of His life was not that, but to seek and to save the lost ; to teach the ignorant, to heal the sick, to bear the cross, to exemplify love. There are, no doubt, many excellent examples of those who make Christ their example in eating and drinking ; but he is no true follower of Christ who imitates Him only in one thing. ' Grow up into Him in all things,' was the idea of the apostle. The stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus is gigantic. It embodies the whole of the code of duty. And not especially in those things which Christ did in common with men of His day is He to be chiefly considered ; nor in imitating Him in that do we become His followers, as some would seem to suppose, who, it may be, to ease their conscience for excess, quote Christ's example of eating and drinking. You might as well say that you are becoming painters, or sculptors, or poets, because Rubens, or Shakspeare, or Phidias ate and drank, while you never think of studying or imitating their great works with the brush, the chisel, or the pen, as that you were be-

coming Christians because you eat and drink like Christ. We should use the goods of providence, to the end that we may work out the noble ideas with which our Saviour was struggling; and for no other end must the Christian use the goods of this world without abusing them. He wants to rise in the divine life; he wishes to live to God, to benefit the world, to elevate his own character: and so he eats and drinks; but whatever he does, it is to the glory of God.

ANXIETY ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS.

And another caution we need to take with us when studying this subject. It is not to be too anxious about our eating and drinking and enjoyment. No doubt every creature of God is good, and worthy to be accepted, if it be received with thanksgiving; but it is not good to be careful about the goodness or exquisiteness of the things which we use. We are cautioned against anxious seeking 'what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed.' It is beneath the dignity of the noble mind to be much occupied with such matters. Some people, indeed, must have their minds occupied with them, but they are rather to be pitied than imitated; and those who have their minds chiefly occupied with the needs of the soul,

the way in which they shall be supplied, how the new man may grow and increase, how the depressed and weary shall be elevated, have chosen the better part, which shall never be taken from them. Martha is a very useful person, but MARY is a still higher and nobler character.

SUMMARY.

Labour, then, is good, and the fruit of labour to be enjoyed, and the legacy of labour to be left, and posterity that is to enjoy and increase it, to be carefully cultivated, and all high and noble principles in the soul are to be educated by means of the things which sustain and comfort life, and that which is best is to be sought and held, though present enjoyment should cease, and all sensual gratifications be denied. Each thing has its own value—some less, some greater. The cultivation of the mind is more important than the gratification of the senses, and the rights of conscience are more to be considered than either. Covet earnestly the best gifts,—not riches, which make to themselves wings and fly away,—not the fame of genius, which is evanescent, but the charity which never faileth, which, while uniting us to all that is best in humanity, allies us also to God our Father, and Jesus our Saviour, whom to love is safety from all harm.

VIII.

THE KING'S DESPAIR.

'Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun ; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity ; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun ? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief ; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.'—ECCLES. II. 18-23.

THE point to which we wish to direct attention, is the self-caused despairing mood in which Solomon is in this book presented before us. He has sought and attained wisdom ; he has planted and builded, and the gardens and woods and noble structures around him attest his success ; he has engaged in commerce, and fortune has proved to him no churl ; he has tried what were the charms of pleasure, and joined in the joys of sensuality. He has found all deceitful. Each thing that spake a

word of promise to the hope, broke it to his sense. Novelty has nothing new for him ; nay, he has discovered that novelty is an old impostor, going by a new *alias*. One would think that he had sufficient reason for dissatisfaction, without seeking for further causes of complaint. He was in that sort of dissatisfied state, that some change, even for the worse, were better. He has no hope, yet this is only a negative state ; he wants despair, that he may have something further to complain of, and that he may be prevented from the disappointment of further experiments. Every joy that with attractive light lured him, had only left him in deeper gloom ; and now he is afraid lest any other hope should induce him to try other experiments in living. In a word, he felt unhappy, and he was determined to continue so. ‘ I went about,’ says he, ‘ to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.’

This phase of the human character is perhaps not very rare. Many people at some one time or other pass through it. It is produced by a form of melancholy into which very successful persons sometimes fall—successful, we mean, in material form,—and is also experienced by persons with whom the world goes hardly. We are to distinguish it from merely dark views of human things. It is a stage of the

miserable in advance of that. Solomon was afflicted with simple and common melancholy when he, looking over all things, pronounced them to be vanity and vexation of spirit ; but the disease took a more subtle and detrimental form when, not satisfied with the apparent gloom and cloud with which he saw all things invested, he was afraid of the least ray of light breaking in upon them, and went about to cause his heart to despair of them,—a miserable employment surely, and one in which he is by no means to be imitated.

HIS MELANCHOLY.

It may be useful to make an anatomy of this melancholy, for I think we can call it by no other name. It is certainly not a perfectly sane state of the mind, but argues a system out of harmony with nature. God made everything beautiful, and with the most agreeable adaptations. The eye was fitted to the light, the ear for sound, the mind for designing, and the hand for action. The tribes of animals are fitted for their condition of life, and man for his. They being of lower order and capacity, have given to them clothing from the great manufactory of nature, their simple food springs spontaneously from the earth, and a den is for them a sufficient home ; but the higher powers of man find

development in the activities which are necessary to procure food, clothing, and houses. I think we must esteem it a great mistake to suppose that, if man had fewer needs, he would be as great as he is. The most noble and powerful races of mankind have not sprung up where the means of life are most easily procured. The South Sea Islands, where a man having planted a single banana and a bread-fruit tree is ensured his food for the rest of his life, where frosts are never felt, and snow never seen,—these gardens of paradise are not the places where man is produced in perfection; but rather is he likely to be found in northern climes, where he has to wrestle with cold, and guard against hunger, and protect himself from the inhospitality of the climate. It is perfectly true that there is a certain amount of cold and sterility which prevents the development of his nature. But it is also true that the necessity of using the arts of agriculture and manufacture, of planting and building, is the very thing which develops and perfects the race of man. So much is this the case, that you will in vain look for high physical force and intellectual ability, except in those places and times in which a high state of manufacture and commercial activity prevails. Admitting this, then, which we must if we are not deaf to the voice of all history, we must also admit that the

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very labour, the planting and building which Solomon went about to make his heart despair of, were the very things which were most suitable for man to be engaged in. This philosophy of his surely is not wisdom, but a form of insanity. Even admitting, which we do, that these things are not of a satisfactory description; admitting that, for the purpose of exciting man to higher endeavour and more full development of his nature, as well as to show that there is a higher nature in him which these things are incapable of satisfying; admitting this unsatisfactoriness, is it right, is it judicious, is it according to the mind of Him who created us with these activities, and the objects on which they are to be exercised, to go about for means and reasons of not mere dissatisfaction, but despair? No, no. The man of wisdom, the man of pleasure, and the man of business, is now become the jaded, worn-out, melancholy man. He has arrived at the issue of the course which he pursued; his conclusion is the result of a diseased imagination. In a word, we look upon him as labouring under a fit of saddest melancholy.

BLACK BILE.

The term which we have employed to designate this state of mind in which we find Solomon during

one era of his life, refers it to a physical cause. The term is compounded of two words signifying black bile, which is indicated as the cause of those sad and moody states, in which a pall is, as it were, cast over the beauty and brightness of the world. Without doubt, the corruption or the stoppage of the secretions of the body has very much to do with the dark views we take of surrounding things. But yesterday, and all was bright—the whole panorama of nature was lit up with a purple light, which brought back all the freshness and feelings of youth ; but to-day, the same world, shorn of all its glory, is a dark prison-house. Things have not altered, nor has fortune visited us with any stroke. The sun shines bright and warm, and we are nearer to the genial summer-time ; but yet—ah, it is as unlike the world of yesterday as possible. The change is in us, not in it ; a change, too, which is not dependent on, nor does it arise from, processes of reason. The mental change depends on one that is physical. The health has become disordered, the nervous system has suffered—possibly from some inadvertence, some excess, some folly ; let us add, some sin—the sin of ignorance, or the sin of presumption. We have studied too intently, wrought too hardly, exposed ourselves rashly, eaten voraciously, drunk intemperately, breathed some malarious atmosphere, neglected

proper exercise, or committed some other crime by which we sinned against the constitution of our being, violated the laws of our God, and put our system out of harmony with the world; and now that which pleased us is hateful—the beauty has become ashes, and mourning succeeds the oil of joy, and the spirit of heaviness is worn instead of the garment of praise. Traced to its cause, this sad state in which we sometimes find ourselves, is found to issue from foolish irregularities, which have engendered, not, it may be, any decided or positive disease, but melancholy; an atrabilious disposition, in which the man, if he be a writer or a talker, is sure to rail against nature, describing her in pictures of woe, and with the accents of despair.

RAILING FASHIONABLE.

Sometimes this railing at nature, picturing her in the very saddest guise, is the natural result of experience, habit, or temperament; sometimes, however, it is only a fashion. We have no reason to suppose that Solomon was in any respect insincere or hypocritical in his objurgations of a world which, through his own excesses, had disappointed him. It is quite otherwise, however, with many who go about railing in good set terms at nature and fortune. They are quite in favour with both; but the fashion, religious

or social, is to rail at them, so without feeling they utter their tirades. The pulpit has not always been free from these fashionable hypocrisies. It is a pity that one should feel sad, but worse, in some aspects, to pretend these miserable hallucinations. We have an abundance of real evils, without heaping up imaginary ones. There are plenty of birds of the night. No need that those of song should convert themselves into owls. We ourselves may soon enough feel the miseries which we now pretend. We do not know that it is wise to anticipate the discovery that all is vanity. Certainly there is no reason in the cultivation of a premature despair.

THE KING'S MELANCHOLY UNCOMMON.

But the melancholy of Solomon was worse than simple melancholy. His was a state of mind not merely produced by outward impressions, but one which he was at pains to perpetuate and deepen. It is said that, when the Libyan tiger is wounded by the arrow, it turns itself upon it, driving the barb deeper and deeper into its own vitals. This was the course which Solomon pursued. Stricken by the bitter poisoned darts of disappointment, he voluntarily strikes them deeper into his soul, and goes about causing his heart to despair of all his labour. A man who does this is surely quite as in-

sane as if, wounded, he should tear open the gash that the life-blood might flow out.

Consider his case. His proverbs are the concentration of human wisdom,—a philosophy of life which the world will never allow to die, and which shall make his name famous to all generations. He has known how to condense in terse apophthegms the thoughts that float in the cloud-land of human imagination; but he fears that these will all die, and no one will remember him, so he makes his heart to despair regarding a fatality which was never to come to pass.

The temple which he built was to stand for many generations—the place of sacrifice and prayer, the type of Him who was to bring in a higher religion, and a deeper philosophy of life. And yet of this he would cause his heart to despair too. Is it not a sufficient rebuke to the King's folly to know that the great purposes of Jehovah for man's redemption were embodied in that structure, and that its sacrifices and services were to enter into the contexture of the religious mind through all time to come?

The various palaces, the works of art, the cities which he reared—why despair even of them? They have their uses, and subserve great ends. They are not enduring, it is true; but why scorn

them on that account? Thousands have been gladdened by them, and why should we account that nought which gives to the souls of men beauty and joy? If the monarch's mind has not been satisfied with the product of his labours, and the works of his men of genius, how many have been gratified by them! Are we to consider them useless because they are not eternal? It will be sufficient surely to know—why should we say find out, as if it were some hidden truth?—that these things are not to live for ever, nor we either with or by them. Not because they shall at some distant time decay, or become the prey of war, should they be deemed useless. Despair does not become us, if we are not utterly selfish of that which has added a joy and glory to humanity. Though they deserve measured praise, they are not to be scorned and despised.

SELFISHNESS AT THE ROOT.

There seems a terrible selfishness in all this complaint that his works were not eternal, and that he was not likely to attain to immortal fame among the sons of men. We recognise the beauty and uses of that desire which is in us all—to live in the memory of the future generations; but we know that this desire may take on a morbid form,

and so work ruin, instead of inciting to noble action. Alexander, that he may be famous, conquers the world ; Solomon, because he fears his fame may die, goes about causing his heart to despair of all he has done. The example taken from the action of the one, and the complaining of the other, are alike bad ; for while a few may imitate either, every one who thinks providence has not dealt with him fairly can go about wringing his hands, and working a great deal of small misery in his own little circle.

WHY NOT TRY WAR ?

It is rather wonderful that Solomon, having tried every form of human action, did not, also for the sake of experiencing a new sensation, try war also. This abstinence, however, we may lay to the account of his quiet nature ; to his philosophy, which showed him its folly ; and to the happy condition in which he found his kingdom. We can almost forgive him his despairing outcries, when we think that he was of such a wise, practical disposition ; and, notwithstanding all the praises that have been sung of war, we cannot help wishing that the renowned conquerors of ancient and modern times had always employed themselves as usefully as the wise, practical, though sometimes complaining, King of Israel.

MINISTERIAL DESPAIR.

And the same wish we ought to utter for ourselves. It is too much the case with us all, that we find it easier to copy a great man's defects than to imitate his excellences. David is far easier imitated in sinning against Uriah than in singing the praises of Jehovah. We find it far easier to utter complaints with Solomon than to follow the counsels of his wisdom. We are far better at proving the hollowness of his mirth than in fleeing from the way of fools. We are also more ready to build and plant, with all the dissatisfactions which attend these operations, than to fear God and obey His commandments, in the keeping of which we should find great reward. The good part is not readily chosen. There is something in the disordered state of our nature which finds its like in the disorder around us, and consorts with it—not happily indeed, but with a sort of elective affinity, like the chemical elements of things. We all, like Solomon, are guilty of our own melancholy. We imitated him in his excesses, hence the moody hours and days we spend; and though we do not know it, we go about sometimes—some of us causing our heart to despair of all our labours which we undertake under the sun. Probably there are no persons

in the world more guilty of this than ministers. The causes are various. *1st*, Their studies, inducing sedentary habits, are far more likely to produce that peculiar form of ill health, which consists not, it may be, of any organic disease, but functional derangement—the parent of melancholy and despairing thought. *2d*, As it is their duty to point man to a better world, and prepare him for it, they are strongly tempted to depreciate below even its proper worth the value of the present and temporal, that the value of the eternal may, by the heightened contrast, stand out more prominently. This may be all very fair, provided it do not take the form of any practical extravagance, which with strong, healthy minds it will not, but which it is too apt to do with those whom constitution or habit, or the strokes of a peculiar providence, have rendered hopeless and despairful; and provided that it do not engender a hypocritical habit of speech, which, while denouncing all human things, is felt to be yet unreal, or, under the pretence of taking up the cross, commits such vagaries as commanding not to marry, or to abstain from meats, or not to rejoice with those who rejoice, or not to use the world. And, *3d*, Ministers are also likely to go about causing their hearts to despair when they see so little fruit of all their labours, not thinking that the seed they sow

may long lie in the field without much sign of vitality, yet be only waiting to burst forth : and also remembering that there are plants which God has made which take a long time to grow, of which sometimes the truth, morally considered, is an instance. The Indiar fig only blooms once, and then at the age of a hundred years. Long it is a weak, small plant, yet at the end of that time it springs up in a short time to the height of twenty or thirty feet, only to bloom for a few weeks, and then die ; but, in dying, to give birth to a hundred plants like itself, each to take as long an age in growing as its parent ere a single flower may be expected. I think some of those who are long in maturing should be content to wait the flowering time of God's providence. Then, *4th*, There is also, it may be, too earnest a desire for that fame—that lasting remembrance—after which Solomon aspired. We would be immortal. It is all fair enough to desire fame and lasting remembrance, when we pursue it according to the laws of righteousness. Every man has a right to carve his name as deep as he can in the heart of the future ; but it is surely foolish to kill present enjoyment because we cannot catch what, after all, is—no, I will not say a beautiful phantom—but a glorious name. In urging that we should not make our hearts despair of the present because

we cannot imagine ourselves enjoying the future, I would not say a hard word to make man less anxious about the attainment, through deeds of noble worth, of a niche in the temple where posterity contemplates the features of the unforgotten dead. There is quite enough of desire for the realization of the material; quite enough of epicureanism; quite enough of questioning what viands we shall eat, and what delicious beverages we shall drink; quite enough of racing for riches, and fighting for a merely transitory power, and far too little of that desire for the lasting approbation of posterity, which in the long run we take to be equivalent to the approbation of God. And may it not be that, though in the silent land we shall find no work or desire with which to engage us, we may yet know what works are being done under the sun,—may yet have some capacity for the reception of joy when our names are mentioned, or of knowing what deeds are yet being done which we initiated, or of observing those ideas which we may have either discovered or given an impetus to—making their way through the minds of the existing generations, gladdening the world by their presence and spiritual fruit? The theory of the state of the departed, which these thoughts imply, whether true or false, is yet of blessed tendency. It would, even apart from the

usual view of the bliss attending the immortality of the soul, be a spur to noble action,—would lead us to spurn baser motives, and the lower life of the eat and drink and die to-morrow philosophy. Sensuality and selfishness would be all the more overcome by the view which not only surveys our alliance and connects us firmly with the humanity which now exists, but also with that which ever shall exist.

SOCIETY DESPAIRFUL.

But the despairful is not alone to be found with ministers. You will find it in all ranks of society. Youth is happily freed from it. We must pass through the various experiences of life ere we front this grim image, and wait to listen to his sad and melancholy moanings. In youthful days we rush away from any of the incarnations in which he goes about the world. Later in life, probably, we may, like the wedding guest, be forced to listen to the ancient mariner's tale of woe, being held by the peculiar fascination of his glittering eye. But at all stages of life we may be momentarily or more permanently disturbed by his lamentations. There are those who, if they have no work, complain of the bad times; if they have it, they complain that they are wearied. Others have had disappointments, and the foundations of society are dissolved. Success

has not stopped the complaints of others, who have still many woes. We are far from making light of the troubles and real miseries of the widow, the fatherless, and the bereaved. We would mingle our tears with theirs. We would sympathize with them. When we see real legitimate sorrow, God forbid that we should say a word to reprove its sacredness. But when this jaded, miserable complaining in the midst of plenty, peace, and success meets us, we would desire to exorcise the unclean spirit. It is to be met with in many beautiful apartments, into which the foot of death has never intruded, where real sickness has never entered, where, however, a regular manufactory of small evils goes forward with unceasing din. In the midst of plenty, and elegance, and ease, there is a felt misery. Books, building, planting, have not all availed to keep away miserable despairing thoughts. The world is all out of sorts, for the soul is not well balanced, and the mind is fretful, because the health is disordered, and the person is not well, because the laws of nature have been violated. Or it may be that the inmate has not had the respect thought to be due, or some long-sought success has not been obtained; and because that on which the heart has been set has been denied, then all is vanity, and there is despair in presence of the fruit of all the labour under the sun.

THE VICTIMS OF DESPAIR.

There would not be so much fruit of evil, if this despair were confined in its effects to those who are its special subjects ; but others are often driven almost to madness by those who, having conceived and brought forth misery, nurse it, and bring it up under their own special eye. In private life, children and dependents are sometimes made miserable by the dark views of life which are continually being presented by parents or masters, who are ever either reciting their own experience of misery, or pointing out the worm in the bud of every joy. It is all quite right to warn against the evils of vice, intemperance, and ungodliness ; and, as a general rule, there is too little of that. But there is also such a treatment of innocent lawful enjoyment by melancholy minds as is calculated to shadow and cloud the world. And this is done by those who take upon themselves the office of instructors, and plume themselves on their wisdom ;—a miserable employment for any one, but especially for those who otherwise are gifted with wisdom and sense.

TEMPERANCE AN ANTIDOTE TO DESPAIR.

If we would enjoy what is enjoyable in this world, we should see that we do not by intemper-

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ance of any kind violate those laws by which it is guided. We should not expect more from the world than it was intended to give, nor let its troubles master us any more than we should allow its pleasures to seduce us. He is a poor soldier who complains that the march wearies him, or that the conflict is distasteful to him. Affliction should not work despair, but patience, experience, and a hope that maketh not ashamed. So shall we escape that mockery of piety which consists in wringing of hands and outerying despair. So shall we be thus faithful worthy followers of Him who through the valley of humiliation went eating and drinking and doing good, and conquered death by the good-will with which He gave up life, that the deserts of the world might hope to blossom as the rose.

THE WORLD SUBSERVES GOD'S PURPOSES.

This world should not be despaired of, as it subserves all the purposes for which it was intended. It was not intended for the permanent home of man. In its present state, and even in any state in which we may fancy it to have previously existed, it could not have been the permanent abode of the individual man. Had man not sinned, no death would have intruded; yet surely must the individuals of the human family have been translated from this scene

to some other. Troubles innumerable we can directly trace to the sin of man. As for such a being as man now is, ignorant, wayward, sinful, it is just such a world as is fitted for his tutelage. He needs instruction, and he needs the rod. In uninterrupted prosperity his rejoicing would go beyond all due bounds, but adversity is sent to teach him consideration. Viewed as a being whose whole conscious existence is shut in by the gate of death, we might show that the troubles and misery which fall to the usual lot of mortality are useful and profitable. The pain which we feel when we are hurt is an admonitory angel, calling our attention to the danger of destruction we are in. Our sense of unsatisfactoriness in the enjoyment of all, is the best schoolmaster we can have to lead us to the learning of the high destiny that awaits us. We do not despair of life. It is just the primary stage in which the immortal being should begin its upward course. It is a place of sin and of sorrow, but also a place of atonement and recovery, and faith and hope,—a place in which, no doubt, the creature groans under the bondage of corruption, but a place from which that same creature shall be yet introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God,—a place in which the glory of all things turns to corruption, but in which also it shall be raised to incorruption,—a place of deserts,

but of deserts which shall yet rejoice and blossom as the rose,—a place which Satan has ravaged, but from which he shall yet be expelled,—a place which at present is an hospital for the recovery of those who have been wounded in the battle of sin, but yet a place which shall become the palatial abode of the saints of God,—a place in which slavery, spiritual as well as natural, binds its captives, but a place in which the ransomed of the Lord shall dwell,—a place which man's moody thoughts render even darker and gloomier than his sins have made it, but a place which the light shed over its very tomb illuminates for the Christian labourer,—a place with many sorrows, but also with many joys. We do not think, considering what man is, what his ignorance is, what the wickedness of his will and the folly of his heart are, that anything can surpass the economy and arrangements by which God would bring sinners to Himself, to happiness and glory, out of this place of sorrow and joy. It is not for us to despair of the great and noble world-building, nor of the works with which man, by the constitution of his nature, is fitted for higher things. Everything is good in its season.

PREPARATORY STAGE.

Still, be it ever remembered that to man the chief

satisfaction arises from contemplating the present as preparatory to the future. The scaffolding and the loose material alone being before our mind, we may fail to discover their fitness and propriety; but when the noble structure rises, when tier on tier ascends, and when the whole pile stands forth in the proportions of the architect's mind, we see no reason to complain of the means by which such a result has been attained. With us the difficulty is, that we only see the scaffolding of nature's great temple. The plan may with more or less of clearness be revealed. Yet what are we, to set ourselves to judge of the proportions or features of that mighty structure which God is rearing out of the depths of the past eternity, and which He shall go on building through the eternity that is to come? To criticise the small portion which our eyes can survey, is almost as silly as for the fly to pronounce upon the proportions of the great cathedral from its observations on the small inequalities which its microscopic vision had detected in the ponderous stones. Let us not then precipitately judge, but carefully inquire into the fitness and excellences of all the works of God, assured that in every disorder there is a hidden fitness, and in all disproportion a hidden beauty, and in misery itself a well-spring of joy.

Despair not of the works of thy hand. They are

not eternal, they are suited to a transient state, they are for a present use. But with all present work let there be ever associated the work of faith and the labour of love. Though the work of thy hands perish, thou, O reader, shalt never die. The cup of cold water given to the disciple in the name of Christ, the cheerful word spoken, the kind deed, the weight lifted from off the back burdened with misery,—the record and the reality of these are everlasting. When despairing thoughts troop in upon the tablets of the mind, and fill the view of the eye of the soul, the best of all things to dispel these wild gibbering fancies, is to turn the eye of faith to the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: Be it so that the sun has a sickly glare, that thinkings which we cannot conquer spread a dark pall over all that was once so bright and beautiful in the scenery of nature; be it so that no earthly medicine can cure the eye whose weakened nerve sees gloom where gladness once dwelt; still faith opens up through all, vistas by which we may see the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, where there are neither sorrows nor tears, and from which sadness and sighing have for ever fled away.

A HARBINGER.

It may be that this very dissatisfaction culminating in despair, is also the harbinger and approaching hope of better things. When winter first sets in, and the light and beautiful snow spreads over the earth her chaste covering, we, yet far from spring, enjoy ourselves, and feel a charm in viewing the death of nature. But when the smoke and the dust have besmirched and begrimed the fair purity of the pall in which it delights nature to invest herself,—when all things look dismal and dreary, and we begin to feel despairful,—we know that then the spring is nearing us, and that soon the sun, wheeling from his northern tropic, will call forth all the sweet flowers, and awake the birds of song. Even so, when through the long winter of discontent we have approached the most despairing period of the dark, cold days of vanity, then are we nearer to the spring-time of the new life, and then may we be laid open to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which riseth in, often, the darkest and most dreary time of man's history, dispelling all his despair, and gladdening him with the beautiful graces and excellences of a new life. If any of us have approached this terrible period of experience, may we turn our eyes to Him who came

to open the prison-house to the captive, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn ; and may God give us light in our darkness, leading us to Pisgah, that we may behold the high lands of hope, where despair never enters !

IX.

MATERIALISM AND MORALS.

'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.' 'And, moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose, and for every work. I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?'—ECCLES. iii. 1, 16-22.

NEAR A DISCOVERY.

IT is "trange how near one may be to making the most important discoveries, and yet miss them. We may walk over the gold-field, and almost touch the hidden treasure, and yet be unconscious of it. It is a common thing to be near to untold wealth. Oftentimes a man will dig down into the earth alongside the mine, and will not find the reward him for all his toil, or he may sink the shaft many fathoms, and, when within a few feet of the

precious treasure, may give over and lose all his labour. It is thus also with the treasures of mental and moral science, and with discoveries in art and philosophy. The thinker frequently hits upon a truth, which, if steadily followed, would lead to most important discoveries, but, from unsteadiness of vision or laxness of pursuit, the thread of thought is suffered to escape, and he continues to wander in the labyrinth.

A PLACE FOR JUDGMENT.

Solomon was here on the point of a most important discovery, when, applying the maxim that for every purpose and for every work there is a time, he concluded that God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; but he seems immediately to have grown dizzy with the thought, and to have recoiled from the magnificent consequence, which can be nothing less than a state of existence after death, in which that judgment may be carried out; for the observation which he had made, was that it is not carried out in this life, 'wickedness being in the place of judgment,'—a very true observation. Since there is, then, a time for judgment, it must be after death, as it has had no room here; and yet, flying off, as it were, to the very opposite pole of thought, he proceeds immediately to say, 'I said in mine

heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see that which shall come after him?’

SUBVERSIVE REASONINGS.

Here, then, are two trains of analogical reasoning, the one of which is necessarily subversive of the other. On the one hand, it is observed that for everything and for every purpose there is a time under the heaven,—to be born, to die, to plant, to pluck up, to kill, to heal, to break down, to build up, etc. There is no purpose or desire or passion in man, or as regards man, but there is a time for its fulfilment or gratification. But there is one anomaly, that there did not appear to be any place or

time here for the fulfilment of justice; for in the place of judgment under the heaven, he saw that wickedness was there, and iniquity was in the place of righteousness. The time that was for every other purpose, led him to expect that there would be a time for the fulfilment of judgment upon each individual according to his deserts, just as there was a time for him to be born and to die, and that there would be the same regularity about the one as about the other; but that was not the case in this world, and therefore the conclusion of his heart, of his whole moral nature, was, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked. He does not do it now, but surely He will do it. The moral nature of Solomon told him God must have a purpose to reward the righteous and the wicked according to their deserts. That is not done here; yet following all analogy, which gives a time for every purpose, if not done here, it must be done hereafter. This is the one side of the argument.

The other side of the argument is the apparent brutality of man. He appears to Solomon to be only a higher kind of beast: 'as the one dies, so dies the other;' the breath of one is as the breath of the other; they all go to the earth, and both, as to their bodies, are compounded of dust. The meaning of Solomon in the seeming distinction which he makes

between the spirit of the beast and the man, is, that you cannot tell the difference here either, otherwise the conclusion in the last verses of the chapter is singularly inconclusive, viz. that the enjoyment of the present is his portion, and that none can bring him to see that which shall be after him; evidently the meaning of the question, 'Who shall bring him to see that which shall be after him?' These, then, are two sides of the great question regarding the existence of the man after death, and the judgment which shall follow,—two sides as they presented themselves to the mind of Solomon; and if we were left wholly to the guidance of reason, we might hesitate before concluding on which side the preponderance lay, though, with the full elucidation of the subject by the words and life and death of Christ, we can have no hesitation in saying that Solomon, in the former of the two analogies, hit upon the right principle, the principle which squares all that is irregular in the moral dispensation of the present world, and reduces to harmony all that confusion which induced him to pronounce everything here vanity and vexation of spirit.

ANALOGICAL REASONING.

Reasoning from analogy or likeness is a very popular mode of deciding an argument, and, with due

precautions, is a very useful guide to truth. But very often, from want of care in neglecting some important difference, the whole argument may be vitiated. Let us then see, in relation to the subject on hand, whether Solomon did not omit some important difference between man and the bestial tribe, which renders his conclusion regarding the future false; and then let us see whether his observation relative to the unequal rewards and punishments of vice and virtue in this world should not absolutely lead us to affirm a life to come, during which these rewards and punishments may take effect.

ANIMALITY.

Is man indeed no more than a beast? That he partakes of much which forms the brutal nature, is quite true. The same earth and gasses enter into the composition of his body. The air which he breathes is the same air. His food is similar. The vegetable and the animal alike appease the appetite of the man and the beast. Both drink at the same fountain. The framework of both is of mechanical construction. Many of the diseases which affect the brute creation have their counterpart in the ills to which human flesh is also heir. The same typical forms are discovered by the comparative anatomist running through the whole range of animal life,

from the lowest to the highest. They come into the world through the same path, they pass out of it through the same dismal gate. The same senses they have in common. Their desires are to a large extent similar, as are their modes of gratifying them. In most things there seems almost as little difference between man and some of the superior animals as there is between these last and those of an inferior grade. Why, then, not at once come to the conclusion that man is but a beast, and that as the one dieth, so dieth the other, and the same destiny of unconsciousness awaits both?

THE MATERIAL ARGUMENT, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

This is the very argument which is still insisted upon by those who deny a future state of existence. There has been nothing new advanced on this subject since the time of Solomon. But there is probably no thinker, who has ever turned his attention to the subject of a future state, who has not felt the pressure of the same facts demanding that he should infer a like fate for both man and the lower animals. But it might well be questioned whether death be the destruction of any of the creatures which God has made, while it is quite certain that there is in man a nature which, with all its similarities to the brute creation, is yet of a superior order. Among

other elements of superiority, he is capable of indefinite progress in thought, in reason. The lower animals come to a certain stage at a very early period, and you can teach them nothing more. The progressive generations of beasts make no progress in superiority over their past progenitors. But it is not so with us; and when that part of our nature by which we are allied to the brutes sickens and decays, the mind, the reason, are just as strong in very many cases as ever, showing no symptom of decay. We might urge an argument which has been advanced by Butler, to show that there is no reason to think that death is the destruction of our living powers—our personality. We insist that death seems really not to destroy the essential being of which we are possessed. It does destroy the frame, the house, the tenement in which the thinking being resides, and renders it no longer tenantable; but there is nothing in the nature of things, nothing observable, which should lead us to infer that we may not live and act, either by an innate force, or by means of some other body—our house which is from heaven, of which St. Paul speaks. We say that we should do so, for our bodies are not properly a part of us. We can afford to lose limbs, all our limbs, without our consciousness being impaired. At different times in our life, as far as matter is concerned, our bodies

are entirely different, and yet we are the same. What can we then infer, but that our essential existence is not dependent on the existence of our bodies? Though such a view as this should be admitted to be inconclusive of the fact of our continued existence, still, if it, as it does, neutralize the positive conception which we are likely to form, that death is the destruction of the soul, then are we left to the due influence of the proper argument for its continued existence. We must see that a very strong reasoning may be founded on the fact observed by Solomon, that for every purpose there is a time, but there seems to be no time given here for the execution of a complete judgment and justice; and the inference therefore remains, that in the future that time will be granted.

THE SPECIAL PURPOSE OF FUTURE LIFE.

Consider what the special purpose and work are for which this future time, and existence of the human being in that time, are necessary. The purpose and work are to enact justice; to carry out the great principles of judgment, so that vice shall have its due punishment, and virtue its due reward. But is this evidently the purpose of God? We should surely say so. A thousand things here lead us to expect that He will do right. The constitu-

tion of our nature leads us to expect that we shall suffer punishment for our wickedness, and that we shall have reward for righteousness. We cannot get over this feeling. We see that oftentimes this judgment does take place; but we also see that it is very partial in its present operation, and yet we conceive that it should be universal. The operation of the law of retribution, in part, leads us to think that He who instituted the partial process will carry it out to its fullest extent. If we could conceive of Him as unable to do so, we need not draw this conclusion; but when we think that He is perfectly able, we have no other resort than to suppose that He will do it. The purpose and work, then, which seem necessary, and for which there must be assigned a time and a place like everything else, are justice and judgment; and since there is no time or place for such purpose and work here, they are to be looked for in the world that is to be.

INJUSTICE EVERYWHERE.

Consider the wide-spread injustice which reigns here, but of which the maxim that there is a time for everything leads us to conclude that there will be a rectification. Solomon has well expressed it in this and the succeeding chapters. 'Moreover,' says he, 'I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that

wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun : and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power ; but they had no comforter.' Here, then, is the great reason why we affirm that there shall be a judgment to come, because in this world they who should judge the oppressed aid the oppressors, they who should quell iniquity are themselves too frequently the transgressors ; because there is no remedy for the tears which injustice causes to flow ; because crimes stalk over the world with brazen front, and sit on the bench of judgment. Who that takes a survey of the widespread oppressions, and violences, and injustices of man against his brother man, but must come to the conclusion of which Solomon seized hold, but allowed apparently to escape from him, that God shall judge the wicked, for there is a time and a purpose for every work ?

THE INJUSTICE OF AUTHORITY.

It may be remarked of these oppressions and injustices that they are done under authority, under the very eye and countenance of justice. Not only does this imply that necessarily, from the fact of the

ignorance of man, the impossibility of collecting proper evidence, and the false testimony frequently tendered, it is at times impossible for a judge, however wise and however just, to do justice; it implies further, that law is sometimes injustice of the greatest kind, and that very often injustice is done purposely in opposition to laws that are just. Oppression has often been legalized, and the law has been in many cases wrested for the infliction of wrong; and there is no redress, for on the side of the oppressors there is power. It is surely a hard case when the innocent has been found guilty, through defects in the administration of justice; and harder still when the innocent are ruined through the corruptions of the throne of judgment. Conceive one perfectly innocent convicted of grave crime, and sentenced to bear the terrible award. Consider that he goes out of this world condemned in the opinion of his fellows, while those who have been the guilty means of his ruin are respected and honoured. If there be no higher tribunal where these wrongs will be redressed, what a sad fate is his! Consider further the millions of the human family who have groaned in bondage and in misery, because bad men having power have perpetrated upon them cruel wrongs. What shall we think of a moral government which gives no time or place to the redress of

crying crimes, which not at any one time in the history of our world have called to heaven for vengeance, but which, ever since the world has borne the burden of the human family, have been manifest upon it? Israel in bondage, making bricks without straw, and compelled to cast the first-born into the river, is only a type of what at all times is going forward in some part of our globe. Slavery, for many ages, was the rule, not the exception, which power made. All the great monarchies of the world recognised its existence, and treated it as a thing which was to be protected and fostered. In Assyria, Greece, and Rome, the slave was denied the chief rights of humanity. For centuries the Christian was held in slavery by the Turk, and treated as a dog. In our own day, the Christian, so called, could breed, buy, and sell man as a slave, if only a little African blood were found in his veins. For ages it was a crime for man who exercised his gift of reason, to think in opposition to the heathen idolatries, or, more recently, the Christian idolatries of the Papacy. Men and women, too, have been thrown to the wild beasts, have been cast into a hopeless prison, have been tortured and burned, for the crime of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience, and the light of reason and revelation. These countless slaves and martyrs, and other

wronged ones, have died in the hope that God would give time and place for judgment. And shall we say their aspirations are all baseless and vain? Shall we say that there is no power or purpose in God to rectify these gigantic injustices? No; the whole sentiment of humanity has ever been on the side of the idea that, after all the judgments of this world have been delivered and executed, there is a final court of appeal beyond the bounds of earth and time. To the judgment which shall be set, and the books which shall be opened, have the oppressed ever looked as their great day of reckoning against their oppressors. Thitherward has the eye of the widow turned for redress against the Pharisee who devoured her house; thitherward has the slave looked from the manacles on his hands for redress against the man-hunter who stole him from his native land, against the slave captor who thrust him in filth and suffocation into the hold of his accursed ship, against the master who wielded the lash over him and compelled him to do his behests; thitherward does the wronged one look for redress against him who, under the plea and guise of affection, reft from her innocence and peace, and then cast her as a worthless, withered flower on the great fetid heap of moral abomination which reeks in the streets of our cities; thitherward do all the martyred ones who shed their

blood for religion and humanity and God,—all look with a sure hope that they shall all have their wrongs redressed, and that the Judge of all the earth will do them right. Is this a vain hope? Are all their aspirations only the fruitless outgoings of an impotent heart after a revenge which will never come, and a redress which no future day will give? No; the answer of the wise man is, ‘I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose, and every work.’

THE HOPES AND FEARS OF THE FUTURE.

So that, notwithstanding all the apparent similarities between man and the beast, and notwithstanding all the shocks of death to the idea that we are destined yet to live, notwithstanding the dull thoughts of despair which are liable to rise up in view of the grave and its corruptions, the heart of the wise man, after all probably a better interpreter of the designs of God than the intellect—the heart of the wise man, in view of the crimes that not only skulk in the wilderness or stalk abroad on the highways, but that are perpetrated under the guise and garb of justice—affirms a place and season for the rectification of all, after the last breath and the closing grave.

The heart of the wise man is here the true type of the heart of humanity. For not alone does the just man who has been wronged hope for the judgment appointed, but the wicked man who wronged his fellows fears it ; and the great mass of our race, in view of the irregular dispensation of justice below, have dispassionately anticipated it. True, there are at all times numbers of men who, being greatly criminal, and hoping against hope, have persuaded themselves that the earthly judgment is all they have to fear ; and others there have been who have had their minds distracted with those views of death which Solomon sometimes at least entertained, so that they thought the logical conclusion, notwithstanding the anomaly, was, that death is the termination of the whole scene of man's history. They confessed that there was an enigma on the side of the moral government of God which they could not solve, on the principle that death was the last of both the wronger and the wronged ; but still they have held to the view which, it seemed, the phenomena of death forced upon them. The great mass of mankind have, however, felt themselves bound to accept the other side of the dilemma. They have held by the idea of a future state, and in great measure they have held by it because there seemed no other way, as indeed there

is not, to rectify the wrongs of the world. This must ever be the main argument, if not for the *immortality* of the soul, at least for a continued existence some time after death. Other arguments may be used by philosophy, but this argument appeals to the profound consciousness of every man. It is an argument embodied in all religions; which has taken the shape of fable and poetry, and of which the wicked man and the just alike feel the force. It is an argument which causes the hand of injustice to tremble, which has caused the heart of the murderer to quail ere he committed the dire deed, and which has pursued him like the furies after it was done; an argument which has suffused the face of the wronged and the oppressed with a smile, and enabled patriots and martyrs to rejoice in the sufferings which their persecutors inflicted. There is no depth of scepticism into which the intellect may plunge, but into which the voice of this great argument of moral retribution will not peal, awakening fearful thoughts. In the busy marts of business, and in the gay circles of dissipation, it often makes its voice heard; and still more, when silence reigns in the sick-chamber, and when the ear listens to catch some intimations of the eternal world to which the soul is hastening on, it is not likely to be silent or unheard. Then comes with tenfold force

the representation of the Revelation ; then the judgment is set as before in Daniel's day, and every one becomes a John, beholding the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, and the great white throne on which He takes His seat, and the books opened, and the judgment proceeding against every man according to his works ; beholding also death and hell cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, and seeing the new heaven and the new earth, and the society of the blessed, from which sorrow has for ever departed.

THE VALUE OF DEATHBED SENTIMENTS.

It has been said—and there is a certain amount of truth in the statement—that a time of sickness, and when dissolution is imminent, is not the period to which we should look for intimation of the reality of the things that shall be. It is true that the time of health, when the nerves are unshaken, and when reason is free from the dominancy of fear, is, apart from other considerations, the best time for coming to positive and just conclusions relative to the eternal world. But there are other considerations, which modify our confidence in the judgment of men in health and with the prospects of long life before them. Many persons are, during life and health, under the dominancy of passions quite as

powerful to prevent the reason from coming to just conclusions relative to the future, as fear in the hour of sickness can be. The strong passions of man for a present illicit enjoyment are surely as effectual to blind the eye of reason, when exercised about a retributive justice, as fear, when calamity comes, can be. The truth is, neither in the individual intellect in health or sickness can implicit reliance be placed. We may, however, consider a strong general sentiment as indicative of that which shall be. Humanity taken thus, as an aggregate, is its own prophet. In this case the sentiment of humanity and of revelation coincide ; and what we may further remark is, that generally as death approaches to the individual, is there a stronger feeling of the truthfulness of this sentiment, and of the Scripture revelation. Then more than ever is the thought impressed on the mind, that God shall judge the righteous and the wicked ; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

A SOLEMN SUBJECT.

This subject is indeed a serious one for all—one not to be dismissed with a sneer or a jest—one which should be looked sternly in the face now—one which ought to modify our whole being and history—one which has a relation to our every

thought, word, and deed—one which touches us as sufferers and as actors,—a subject lying at the foundation of religion, its hopes, its fears, its rewards, and its punishments,—a subject the consideration of which wisdom presses upon us all. For though we may have no great wrongs against our fellow-men to avenge, and though we may have no great crimes to account for, yet, since all things come in there for review—thoughts, words, deeds—and since in the future state the award is to every man according to his works, there is not one of us who is not interested. Most of you have never been before any court of justice here, nor are you likely ever to be. The only court in which your actions have been the subject of judgment is the court of social opinion, in which all our characters are from time to time canvassed, where, it is true, we may be charged with crimes of which we are not guilty, or honoured for virtues which we do not possess. But whether society have done us that justice which we deserve or not, still, for the purpose of fixing our condition in the eternal world, God's tribunal is also set, and before it we must appear, that we may, in the powerful and pertinent language of Scripture, 'receive the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil.' This doom may be eluded while on earth. Conscience, which in some is the terrible

avenger of crime, may be drugged to sleep in this life, nor awaken till in the future world it is roused up. There are instances in this life where there appears to be no remorse, no sting left for him who has perpetrated the most cruel crimes. The furies do not here take vengeance on every murderer or tyrant. Nero could enjoy the burning of Rome, which he had caused, to the sweet tones of the lyre. But the time is appointed for the awakening of that moral nature which the criminal has violated, and then shall the soul know no peace or rest.

The exact nature of those punishments which await the wicked, or of those enjoyments which are to be the reward of the righteous, we cannot understand. Scripture represents them in language calculated to give us the highest idea of the misery of the one, and the bliss of the other. Fire, as the most terrible destructive agent here known, is the representative of the one; and a place where there is no sorrow or tears, but where song is the chief occupation, symbolizes the other. The award is summed up in these words: 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'

THE PERMANENCE OF MISERY.

The great mystery which yet remains in the thought, that misery is to be a permanent thing in

the universe of God, we do not profess to be able to solve. There are reasons which may be urged why the wicked, as they ever remain so, should also be for ever miserable. In the meantime, let every one secure the good part which shall not be taken from him. As we now live, so shall eternity be to us. May we seek that repentance which is the gift of God,—that renewal of our nature now in the day of grace, which is the groundwork of all true peace and happiness, and which shall be the test of our fitness for the heaven of God. We may be assured, if any of us are lost, it must be because we will not now come unto that God who hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he would turn and live. If we are lost, it will be because we transgress the laws of His gracious salvation; and if through eternity we suffer, it will be because the necessary laws of the providence, and even grace of God, require it. Let us live, then, in view of the great white throne. ‘He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’ So shall we not fear for the judgment that cometh, and for which God hath fixed a time, since for every work and purpose there is a time prepared in the pre-arrangements of the almighty Creator and Redeemer.

X.

EXISTENCE OR NON-EXISTENCE ?

'So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun : and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power ; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.'—
ECCLES. iv. 1-3.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

THAT in Solomon's day they who had gone to their graves were better off than those who had still the warm pulse of life beating in their bosoms, and that those who were not yet born were in a better case than either, are the two sentiments to which the wise man gives utterance in these verses. How far he was correct in these opinions, it may be worth our pains to inquire.

STATE OF SOCIETY.

These two sentiments are founded upon certain observations which he had made concerning the state of society, especially in regard to the unequal

dispensations of justice in his own day, the oppressions which were exercised, the sorrows which were borne, and the comfortless state of each child of affliction ; and his conclusion is, that it were better all were dead, or that they had not yet been born,—a very wide and far-reaching conclusion, including not only the oppressed but the oppressor, the subject and also the sovereign ; the poor man who sought justice, and the judge who denied it ; the man upon whom the weight of sorrow rested, and his brother who either fled from his presence that he might not be troubled with his tale of sorrow, or felt that he had no words of comfort but such as were empty sounds, and incapable of lightening the load that pressed down the soul of his companion with intolerable grief.

AN EXCEPTIONAL TIME.

Now it may be asked, Was Solomon's time exceptional, or rather, was it not one which was, upon the whole, rather a happy period ? In his days wars had ceased. His people were at peace with neighbouring nations. It was a time of reconstruction. The arts were being developed, commerce had received a grand impetus, palaces were being erected, the glorious temple of God was reared—the glory of Israel. To Solomon's day the Jews looked back

with pride as the culminating period of Israel's greatness. The neighbouring nations, too, were free to pursue their avocations. The great seafaring people of antiquity were spreading their sails, and ploughing unknown seas. From India was brought whatever could contribute to luxury, or deck with beauty. The ivory and the gold, birds of beautiful plumage, and animals curious and rare, stocked their aviaries and menageries. The great King himself engaged in trade and manufacture and commerce with the avidity of a merchant of modern times. His ships, in company with those of Tyre, came home laden with all the spoils of the East. What period of the world's history more, or even so prosperous? And yet, with all these evidences of what might in the language of our day be called progress, Solomon's observation was: 'I considered all the oppressions done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead that are already dead, more than the living who are yet alive.'

THE CONTRAST.

We dare say that to a large extent he was right; for what, after all, did this wide prosperity do for

the great masses of the people who were engaged in labour under hard taskmasters, or who were domineered over by the lords of the soil or the owners of capital ? When we look at the fine buildings erected, the noble ships constructed, the vast trade pursued, the piety evinced, we might think that the world had entered on a foretaste of the millennium—that all was bright and glorious and happy. This, however, it would appear, would be a great mistake. Solomon, who lived then, tells us of another world than this prosperous one of the general historian. There are other things than palaces and temples and commercial gains to be looked to, but of which history in its eulogies takes no notice lest they should mar its picture—viz. those who build these structures, hew stones, carry mortar, hew its timbers, pay the taxes which support all this magnificence. Almost all these workmen are little better than slaves ; many of them are so. The liberty of the subject, too, is badly understood, and the laws are badly executed. There are in the judgment-seat men who are corrupt, and near it are corrupters. You may see bribes passing from these to those, and the cause of the poor, when it comes up, is dismissed. These things, which sometimes happen yet as rare occurrences, were then usual. Whether Solomon ever, like the great

Harcun-al-Raschid, disguised himself that he might find out the villanies which were being perpetrated in Jerusalem, we know not. He had some means of personally observing them, which seem to indicate that he had veiled the glories of the king while his eyes were permitted to look on such scenes. On these incognito journeys he could see what sorrows were those which labour suffered, perhaps from his most trusted servants and most honoured judges. But however he became acquainted with the state of the poor, we can well give him credit for having made correct observations; for do we not still to some extent see the same things,—poverty beside wealth, squalor beside elegance, misery raising its wail near scenes of joy, the back lane hovel abutting on the grand palace, and want wailing bitterly for bread near profusion of feasts and banquets? These things, we know, have a tendency to meet in cities, which, as they arise in grandeur, descend in meanness and filth and squalor. The village may contain little splendour, but there is hardly to be found in it a misery which is not alleviated; but the city which proclaims its greatness, also conceals sinks of crime and dens of misery. But, bad as some of our modern cities are, we have no doubt they are vastly superior to those of ancient Bagdad, Nineveh, Babylon, or Jerusalem. No attempt was then made, as now,

to improve the sanitary condition. Jurisprudence then was almost unknown. Justice was dispensed by favouritism. Kings and their followers were everything ; peoples were only the ministers of their wants and pleasures. On the side of the oppressors was power, and the wail of misery and the cry for vengeance went up impotently to heaven ; while the great men of the day, seeing no deliverance from above for those who on earth had no help, began to think there was no Providence to notice, and no God to save those whom they oppressed, robbed, or destroyed.

Now, seeing all this, by whatever way of observation, Solomon was so affected that he thought those dead were better than those living, and those not yet born better than either.

SUFFERING.

With regard to the first observation, we may say it was very natural. When the mind is fresh from the contemplation of some picture of distress, how natural to think that it were better that its subjects should cease to be ! Better they were dead, we say, than suffering so. When we have pictured to ourselves the Israelites in Egypt, we can understand all that is meant by the statement of the historian, that they made their lives bitter with hard bondage

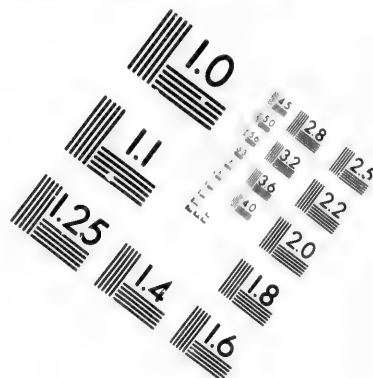
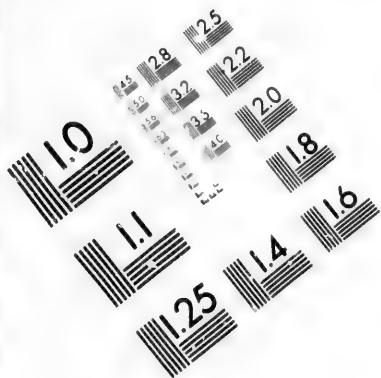
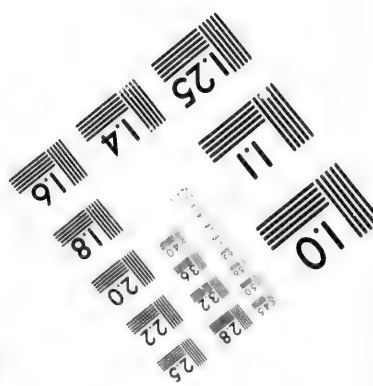
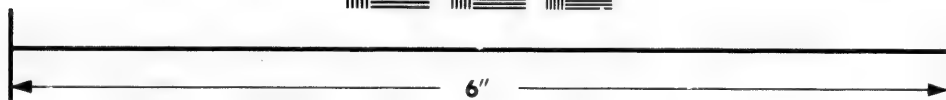
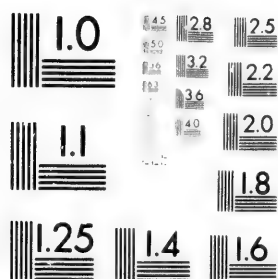


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in mortar and brick, and in all manner of service; all their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour: we can understand how the Algerian captives pined for death—how at the slave block, or in the slave pen, men could sigh for deliverance which was to take them away from a suffering which was too hard to bear. And thinking still further of the sufferings which are the lot of most, at one time or other, from disease and poverty, we can have little hesitation in applying the observation to them, that it were almost better they were dead than living. Coming away from such scenes, we might very naturally come to this conclusion; yet we must consider at the same time, first, that we should not permit ourselves to extend this sentiment to the whole of the race, as that would certainly reflect on the goodness of God, who made the world, and governs it; and secondly, we should take notice of the fact that in all suffering, where not punitive, there is an element of good which, if well used, might be found largely to compensate the pain and the woe. Upon the whole, we do not agree that there is more of suffering than enjoyment, now, nor when Solomon made the observation. I think we may say that a sovereign dandled in the lap of luxury is not the best judge on this point. No man can tell what the experiences of the labourer, even

though a slave, are, save those who have come through them. To look on a man digging drains or drilling rocks from early morning till late eve, one would say, What enjoyment can he have? And yet, if you will examine the matter fully, you may find that he has almost as much as you. It is only when one has come down in the world, that hard labour pinches; and even then, oftentimes, those brought up in luxury and idleness will tell you that it was not till they were compelled to work hard that they knew the keen zest and enjoyments of life. And if we turn away from labour to consider the sorrows of disease, we may affirm that, except in very extreme cases, the enjoyments of life have far overbalanced the misery. Health is the rule, sickness is the exception. A few days or weeks of suffering cannot be held to outweigh a long life of health's racy enjoyments. Most suffering, too, is remedial; and, generally, disease ceases to produce suffering when it could be no longer necessary in calling attention to the organ for which remedy was needed, while it gives us opportunities of exhibiting the highest qualities of our nature in patience and sympathy. We cannot, therefore, look upon sufferings as a reason for the affirmation that it were better that he who suffers had not been born.

INJUSTICE.

Neither can we say that the fact that good men suffer many injustices, is a reason for the assertion that it were better the men who suffer them had not been born. It was observed by the heathen philosopher Socrates, and approved by Plato, that the man who did the injustice was in a far worse case than he to whom it was done. These philosophers made this affirmation without taking into their estimate that there is a future judgment, though with some perception of the fact implied in that account. Let there be an immortality given us, and it will appear so at once; for while injustice may harm me in property or person, or by the aspersion of character, he who does it is harmed in his most interior nature. There is by it a spot ingrained in his soul which the eternities will not wash out. He feels himself to be a villain—to be under the ban of God. Fear follows him; guilt is heavy on him; and of him alone it may be said, It were good if that man had not been born. Leave all the poor, miserable, sorrowful ones to their comfort,—they will not believe you, O Solomon, wise though you be, that it were better for them to be dead,—at least till the time comes when the good God by His messenger says to them,

Come away out of the world of trial to the world of rewards. There is no real evil but that which is also guilt. Sin alone is the great sorrow which we need removed, that it may be said to us even in suffering, 'Be happy.'

THE PAST AND PRESENT.

The other sentiment of Solomon is one with which we have not so much fault to find,—that at that time—we might almost say, at any time—better is he who hath not yet been than both they. In other words, the experiences of those who come after in the various stages of the world's history, are advances on those which precede. 'Say not the former times were better than these, for thou dost not wisely inquire concerning this matter.' After paradise the world collapsed. Man fell to the bottom of his degradation. It was no slow or gradual descent. From the great depths of a brother's murder, from wild crime, from the wants of barbarism, man had to begin the ascent to brotherly kindness and civilisation. Through the centuries this progress has gone forward. If we go back far enough, we shall find everywhere barbarians. The Jew is the first of civilised people; and how much is there in their history to show us that that civilisation was, notwithstanding

revelation, at first nought, and always low ! Jacob's life and morals were by no means praiseworthy. He is a circumventer and a deceiver. We can imagine nothing worse than the general conduct of his sons. Though, under the guidance of Moses, Israel was restrained from much evil, in the days of the Judges conduct crops out, showing them to be without any standard of morals save that of the most barbarous kind. The law did much to civilise them ; but from the accounts of prophets, they generally despised it—its moral parts fully as much as its ecclesiastical requirements. We can hardly refrain from thinking that their desire for idolatry was strengthened by the freedom from purity and justice which it afforded. The pictures of them given by 'saiah and Ezekiel are very sad to contemplate, and fully bear out Solomon's sentiment, that the judgment-seat was the citadel of injustice, and that on the side of the oppressors was power. 'How is the faithful city become a harlot !' Jerusalem was so full of injustice, that not one was to be found who would seek truth or execute judgment. And if this was the case with Judah, what was the state of the surrounding nations, where they had none of the advantages which Israel possessed ? A religion base and vile, and a morality that was as low as their religion,

whose gods were personifications of the worst passions and desires of man, and who naturally produced worshippers like themselves. The state of the people, as far as we can learn it from such passages of history as give us a view of those days, was dreadful. The people were superstitious, enslaved, vile. Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, were all the same. Only in Greece and Rome did men emerge from the lowest state of morals and religion. Only in one of these two states of all the ancient world, and during a short period of their existence, would any of us wish to have lived. A hundred years cover all the time in Greece that one could have wished to be born. Of Rome, hardly more. It is true we have many fine things written of the administration of justice, at least of its theory. It is reported of the Queen of Sheba that she said to Solomon, 'God hath made you king over His people to the end that you should judge them, and render justice and judgment unto them;' and yet we see what Solomon's own opinion was of the way in which justice was administered. We learn also that the kings of Persia were accustomed to administer justice in their own persons, and, to qualify them for this work, they were instructed by the Magi in the principles and rules of justice; but we well know how such justice is likely to be administered

by all irresponsible power—save in the case of a very wise and incorruptible king. Under a Moses, a Solomon, or a Cyrus, justice might be faithfully enough administered; but under others who are generally ignorant—the slaves of passion, surrounded by crowds of flatterers, and ministers to pleasure—what could be expected but that all kinds of injustice should be perpetrated? And they were. If a man committed an offence, he, with all his family and relations, had to pay the penalty. Satraps were allowed to perpetrate the worst of cruelties on the people of the provinces; and everywhere the people groaned. Those who were yet to be born could hardly light on worse times, and they might await better. No doubt, times as bad have frequently occurred since. The period of the decadence of the Roman Empire, and of the dark ages, was a miserable time for one desirous to see good to live. The period of the Reformation was one of grievous suffering to many; but it was a period of bright prosperity and cheering hopes. The people of this land are now the most happy, we think, all things considered, that ever lived. There are evils now, and still will be; but they are fewer, and are lessening. We say it is not better to be dead. Wrong judgments are sometimes pronounced; false witnesses may sometimes take away

the property we should possess, damage our reputation, or even, on very rare occasions, sacrifice innocent life. The robber and the murderer still stalk among us. Bad men foment disturbances, and there may still be in our politics and constitutions the seeds of wars. Pestilences still afflict, especially where men neglect the laws of health. Vices—social vices—are still among us. Morality is loose, and the foundations of religion are being shaken, and with them the principles of morals. The reforms from which so much has been anticipated, have not fulfilled their promise. Intemperance still steals away the senses, poisons the springs of thought and action, bloats the face, makes reason reel, and wise men talk folly, introduces discord into society, destroys family peace, decimates our numbers, digging for great numbers early graves. The education of intellect has failed to make the nature holy, and has become an instrument of power to the evil as well as to the good. The sciences have led men away from God, as well as from superstition. The critical philosophy has not only borne away the accretions of error, but sapped the foundations of truth. This at least it has done for many who, dazzled and dizzied, have fallen into the great chasms which have been opened by the volcanic thoughts which

agitate opinion. From one point of view, we have fallen on happy times ; from another, on times very disastrous. We believe that out of all this will grow a higher and fairer form of society, in which the religion of Jesus will be the ruling power, taking hold of men's souls, and pervading them as it has never yet done, and producing a higher form of morality than the world has yet seen—the morality of love rather than of law—working in and through the various appliances of civilisation yet in its infancy, of science to be yet developed,—to the uplifting of the low and toiling, making them also partake in blessings which they have so far only procured for others, but hardly tasted themselves. And with these views we would almost say, Better is he that is not yet born. The probabilities are, that he will see a better state of things than yet has obtained in the world. The kingdom of heaven and earth will, we trust, be largely advanced. And although there will still be much sorrow, and although disease may exist, yet will there also be many alleviations of earth's miseries. Although all is preparation for war, we yet trust it is preparatory to the period when they shall learn war no more ; and although the vices which surround us still are appalling, yet we trust to see them, in large measure, rooted out of the world,

and that the whole earth will become one garden of God. Were choice given to souls before coming into the world of the time when they should be born, the wise ones would always say, Let us wait ; only the foolish, to whom curiosity is a failing, would have made their appearance so far.

COLUMBUS AND THE PRESENT.

What would Columbus not give to see this great continent, which his far-seeing eye gave to the enterprise of the Old World, as it is now,—with its woods transformed into rich farms, its prairies waving with golden wheat, its rivers and lakes traversed by steam-ships, its thousands of miles of rail, the long trains of merchandise and travellers hauled by the wondrous locomotive, its harbours filled with ships of construction and size such as he never dreamed of, its towns equalling in size and population, nay, many times greater than those which he was accustomed to—the then capitals of Spain, England, Portugal, or France ? I would almost affirm that he would give up his glory as the discoverer, if he could only live on this transformed continent for a few years. And, doubtless, it would still be worth waiting to see what shall be the future history of those states and of the colonies in the great Confederacy which the politics of the times are shaping

for ourselves and our descendants. Without doubt there is a grand future before us. We refuse to believe that the end has come, and that the consummation of all things is near, though we do believe that there is an applicability in the announcement, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' not less important, though in a different sense from that in which it was used by John or Jesus. Whatever we may think of the success or failure which shall attend the working out of the problems which old world civilisations have to deal with, there is no doubt that, for centuries to come, great and glorious developments of society will be made on this continent, and in other places, where our race, our religion, and our civilisation having been transplanted, have begun to grow and flourish. The fairest and mightiest trees of the future forest of nations may be those which now are only saplings.

MILLENNIAL DAWN.

While it is pleasant for innocence to think of a judgment where wickedness shall have its reward, it is also more pleasant to think of a state of society which would hardly need such a tribunal,—where liberty was given and appliances prepared by which man—each man—could do the very best for himself,—could become most intelligent, most moral,

most religious, most happy. We think we may say we are approaching such a state. There are, no doubt, many things which bode evil. The natural depravity of man still manifests itself in many ways. Intemperance, and debauchery, and looseness of religious views, as we have already said, obtain ; but by the use of means, by the religion of the cross, by the power of the truth, these things may be corrected, and the nations may be regenerated. Such views are cheering to those who have any interest in posterity ; and we all have. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were not alone in their joy at the promises of God, that they should be the fathers of happy nations, having possession of lands flowing with milk and honey. Though Christianity concentrates the attention much on self, that it may be renewed, and that it may be the subject of our special cares—striving with all our power to enter in at the strait gate—yet does it also unfold to us bright and glorious prospects, for our encouragement as well as for the honour arising therefrom to Christ. And so the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God meets our vision, and we are cheered by the prospect of new heavens and a new earth,—a new earth which shall indeed be the abode probably of men in the flesh ; and a new heaven, where, too, if we by faith in Jesus are purified, we may yet

enter and enjoy the happiness of that state which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEAD.

It may be that there are some means by which the dead are acquainted with what is going on in this world, although we have no means of verifying the conception. If this be indeed so, the earlier inhabitants of the world have not so much cause of complaint that their earthly being was not reserved for a later period in history. Still it must be sad-denying, if sadness can be theirs, that they had not an experience of the better day. Those who for want of light erred, may say, We would, we could have done better, if we had lived during the days of Christianity and of civilisation. We would not have been so formal, nor so superstitious, nor so regardless of the high behests of conscience; we would not have been led to call good evil, and evil good, as we oftentimes did while we were on earth. We would not have been stained with crimes which we committed through error and the darkness of the world. Men who thought, for instance, that by persecution they were doing God service, and who after all may have been pardoned, will lament that they did not live when civil and religious liberty were understood, and when they would have been

saved from the terrible blunder of trying to compel men to think by the rule and authority of the self-constituted judges of truth and opinion. Men who were the victims, too, of oppression, might surely desire that they had fallen on periods when they could have enjoyed the labour of their hands, and the comfort of their own thoughts. And we, too, although our condition on the whole is very happy, may yet, in the far future, if it is given us to know what takes place in the world which we have left, sigh that our lot of existence turned up so soon. We would wish it had been ours to know the discoveries which are awaiting announcement, but which we cannot wait to hear,—to see the advance in art which we yet may never behold,—to live in that future when the complete emancipation of mind from error shall have taken place, when truth shall stand forth in fuller and fairer proportions than ever yet she has been beheld in. It may be, indeed, that there are dark and dismal days in the world's future history, which shall cause its inhabitants to exclaim, 'The former times were better than these.' It may be that there shall be a decadence of civilisation and an uprise of barbarism which shall destroy the fair fabric which has been rising during the past centuries, and that European and even American progress shall become retrograde,

—a time when the lot of men shall be most sad ; but we believe that, under the providence of God, our world is sweeping onward to a brighter day, and we can think that the children yet to be born shall have even more peace, virtue, and happiness than we ever possessed. May it so be, though our eyes should never see it, and though we have no part or lot in anything that is done under the sun.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

We have not here thought of inquiry into the comparative condition of the dead in Christ, or into the sentiment of Paul, that it is better to be with Christ than here. Our inquiry is not as to the comparative merits of the people of God in heaven and on earth. Without doubt, if we are His, it will be of but little comparative moment when we have lived, or when we have died. And yet we can imagine Old Testament worthies wishing that they had lived in our day. And is not this the meaning of our Saviour when He tells us that many prophets and righteous persons had desired to see and hear the things which the disciples and Jews saw and heard, and had not been permitted ? We may then, while admitting the felicity of these departed saints, still think of the happier state of the dispensation of Christ, and bless God that the present is, of all

other ages which the eyes of man have seen, the one which is the most happy, though what God hath yet in reserve for them that love Him on earth may be far more bright and glorious than even our blessed and glorious day.

XI.

THE ENVIOUS MAN.

‘Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.’—ECCLES. iv. 4-6.

CONNECTION OF SENTIMENTS.

ONE would at first sight think there was little connection between these three verses—that they were separate proverbial remarks. They are not so, but are closely related. The working, successful rich man is envied, because he has had success ; but by whom is he thus envied ? Why, by the fool, who folds his hands together, and, in laziness and misery and poverty, eats his own flesh : from which the preacher deduces the reflection, that the best and happiest condition of life is not that in which a man is by the success of his labours set on high among his fellows, the mark for their envy and covetousness, probably breaking out on facile occasions, to take from him all that he has accumulated ; but that the easiest and most to be desired state is

that in which a man has just enough—sufficient for his needs. With one hand full there is a present content ; but with both hands full there is anxiety and care, and a fear of the bloodshot eye of want, and the stealthy tread of the thief, and the dagger of the assassin robber. The same medium state of worldly condition is in Solomon's eye here as in that other passage, though with different reasons for its excellence, where he makes Agur say, ' Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain.'

The three classes into which the world may be divided are :

1st, The rich, who have become such through their own labours, or those of their ancestors or friends.

2d, The poor, who are so through neglect, want of industry, or misfortune ; and

3d, Those who have attained the happy medium, in which they have enough for all proper wants.

Of course this division is more convenient than accurate,—what would be poverty to one, being abundance to another ; but still, these things having due allowance given them, the division may pass.

But we are not called on here to view all mankind. Rather our attention is called to some out of our great multitudinous mankind. And here Solomon calls our attention to those of them who may be taken as special instances of, 1st, Highly successful labour; 2^d, Criminal want; and 3^d, Moderate abundance. The second of these envies the first; the third is more likely to have peace, neither envying nor envied.

Let us consider the annoyances which a man experiences from the evil-minded, who envy him his success. These are twofold. There is a consciousness that he is thus envied, which takes away the zest of his enjoyment; there is danger from them that his riches may be taken away by theft, robbery, or the revolution of things.

TO BE ENVIED, UNPLEASANT.

It is a very unpleasant thought to any man that he is envied of his fellows. To think that our fellow-creatures are in sympathy with us, is one of the highest of earthly enjoyments. We value their opinions and sentiments when they are favourable; and though our purse be full, and our houses luxuriously furnished, and our table groan beneath abundance, and all our outward circumstances and appointments be grand and costly, we do not like

the thought that for all this we are envied of our neighbours and friends, and we consider ourselves badly treated. Though there may be an inward satisfaction that we are better off than they, yet we do not think it right or good that they should indulge hard feelings towards us therefor. This is so, although we may even take a satisfaction further, in showing off our advantages through pride, and in order that we may increase their envy, which, though annoying to ourselves, we yet think is far more so to them ; for it is wonderful how we are ready to suffer, if we can only make others who are at enmity with us suffer more. It is not uncommon for us to hear people say they would go to any expense to have satisfaction upon some one whom they dislike, or who has injured them. A man will go to law, though he knows it will cost him far more than the matter in dispute is worth, if he only can injure him who has done him the wrong more than himself. Vain people, too, will launch out into expense, that they may attract more eyes to themselves than their rivals in display. We are not sure but that the feminine portion of the community like magnificence of dress fully as much that they may excite the envy of c^thers, as for any real love for the beauty and excellence of apparel ; and it would be painful to inquire how much study in

scholars, how much benevolence in philanthropists, how much earnestness in Christians, may be infected with the same taint of vanity, trying to overcome others in the manifestations of similar excellences. We do not know that it would be proper to condemn that principle of rivalry, from which is evoked so many excellent results as spring from it to the world ; but we may at least remark, that we should, as far as possible, act in all these things from higher motives than envy, or a desire to excite it in others. We should work, because God has formed us for activity ; we should beautify existence, because God has placed in us tastes to be gratified ; we should adorn the home, and even the person, within due measure, for thus we are carrying out the design of God, who made the world beautiful ; we should be benevolent, because we should endeavour to drive out that evil which has somehow made a temporary and partial lodgment in God's works, and thus be fellow-workers with Him ; we should strive to establish the kingdom of Christ, in those forms which we think are most excellent, and in accordance with the principles of truth and right : but in all this we should take care not to excite envy nor to gratify pride ; we should try to help those who are engaged in the same great works for the general benefit, nor for a moment cast a stumblingblock in

the way of those who are God's fellow-labourers and ours ; but if we do so, we will consider it hard that others should continue to envy us any success we may have had ; and though we may forgive them for it, something of the feeling of Solomon will be expressed by us : ' That for all this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.'

ENVY WORKING TO OUR HURT.

But as every sentiment cherished by man is likely to embody itself in action, the feeling that our neighbours envy us our success has a further tendency to our discomfort. Although we may not be able to brave its operation, we feel that the envy of our neighbours is in some underhand way working for our hurt ; and it is impossible to say what course it will take, how it is about to manifest itself, and what disadvantage it may bring us. It may come out in the spread of insinuation and innuendo, in the distortion of truth, in the unfounded tale, in the downright lie, which may sap the very foundation of that success which we have had. When envy once finds a home within the heart, it will go to great lengths, nor be at all scrupulous about means.

DISAFFECTED CLASSES.

All this goes on in a settled state of society, but more so among disaffected classes. Continually there are to be found those who live on the industries of others. They have not, and they cannot want. They will not dig; to beg they are ashamed, and they will therefore steal. Their envy produces a desire to attain wealth; and as they are too indolent to work for it, they fall into the snares of the devil, who leads them to theft and robbery as a means of possessing what they so earnestly desire.

Add to all this, that in many places where the means of life are difficult of attainment, there is a constant fear of revolution upon the minds of those who are the possessors of property. In these lands it is not so, but the time may come when hungry mobs shall be found scaring the rich and comfortable.

INDOLENCE AND ENVY.

We may say that this is the natural result of the envy which is so universal among men, together with that indolence which Solomon alludes to in the fifth verse. If either of these were alone the possessor of the individual, the matter would not be so bad: idleness alone, without envy of industry,

might not be so annoying to those who are well off ; but where one knows that the idle, careless fellow, who is eating the flesh off his own bones, would also take all that you have, covets earnestly your choicest treasures, he becomes unbearable.

HOW THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS SHOULD AFFECT US.

Instead of the success of others being a matter of envy, it should be used as an example of promise to us, inducing us to go and do likewise. The life of the great man teaches us that we also, being brother to him, may become, in a measure, great. There is wealth, too, to be had, without robbing any man of what he has. It is always to be found in economy and work. For long enough this doctrine was hid, even from the wise and prudent. Even yet we try to find it anywhere but in honest labour,—in gold mines, or in speculation, or in gambling,—and we may chance to find it laid up in some of these ; but it has all come from industry originally, and, in most places, it can be got there in a fair measure still. At any rate, it cannot be got in idleness. We may cherish envy of him who has succeeded, and fold our hands till it eats into the very marrow of our bones, but we shall be no nearer the attainment of fortune than when we commenced the operation.

THE IDLE FOOL.

Solomon calls the man a fool who thus folds his hands and sits down discontented and idle ; and so he is. What greater folly can that man be guilty of, who, endowed with hands which were made for work, folds them in quiet rest ? God gives no talent, no faculty, to be rolled up in a napkin. For every sum that you borrow, you must pay interest to your banker ; and for every talent which God gives you, you must return the usury. You may not be endowed with a grand intellect, you may have had a poor education, you may have no fine perceptions of the beautiful, but you have got hands, and they certainly were given you to work ; and woe to the man who does not work as God has bidden him. Sometimes the punishment comes upon him in this life. ' Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, yet a little folding of the hands to sleep : so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.'

USURY FOR TALENTS.

We have said that God requires usury for His talents. Not, however, that He may reap all the advantage from them. No ; but that the man himself may reap all the advantage. See how the

man is rewarded for the just use of his ten talents: why, he is placed as the governor of ten cities. What is this but to teach us that God will advance and raise and glorify him who acts according to the laws of his being, employing his talents for wise and useful purposes? God always does so, and, in glorifying God, we are securing our own best interests. Some may think, Well, but surely you do not mean to say that this hand-work, this industry, is related to the right use of talents with which God has endowed us? We think it is. We do not say it is the highest form, but it is a form, of employment of talent, and, as far as it goes, it is acceptable to God. Some people may think that God has no care for such things as the way in which people spend their time,—whether they are idle or industrious, whether they are engaged in increasing or diminishing the world's wealth and comforts; that is, whether they are making the world, as far as material things go, worse or better. God attends to far smaller things than these. He careth, in some sense, even for the ox that treadeth out the corn, and He careth that a man be diligent in his business. No doubt He desires to see man occupied with higher thoughts, and engaged in nobler works—that is, in doing justly, loving mercy, and in walking humbly with his God; but what man can

do any of these higher things without also performing the lower? No lazy, idle, envious man can do any of these things. A man may be industrious without being just or righteous or pious, but he can hardly be a good man, or a pious man, who is not engaged in some work by which man can be bettered. Each man, when he comes into this world, enters into the great copartnery of humanity, where there are reciprocal obligations by each member to every other, and, upon his leaving the world, we may fairly inquire, 'Well, what have you done for our good? Did you only enjoy? Were you a drone?' As this question is answered, so will the state be.

HAND, HEAD, AND HEART WORK.

We do not require the literal work of the hand alone. Some men benefit society a great deal more by the head than others by the hand. Nay, we believe we may work with and by the affections and heart more for humanity than with the hand. A man who writes good books, makes good speeches, institutes good schemes, may do more for the good of the species than with many hands. In the division of labour the hand must be used by some, the head by others, and we may say that the heart is the great instrument by which some work and benefit

their kind. But all have some faculty which may be figuratively called their hand,—that by which they can benefit the people among whom they dwell most; and in the use of this lies man's duty, with this intensive direction: 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

We have heard of people burning their candle at both ends. No man does this more effectually than the person described here. He sits and folds his hands till poverty comes upon him, and he pines away with envy till he gets thin and miserable. His candle is burning at the end of both property and person. While his substance is wasting through idleness, his flesh is wasting away through the consuming fire of envy which has fevered his whole soul, so that the flesh itself consumes, and the whole man becomes shrivelled and blasted. I don't think this will be esteemed any mere fancy picture by those who have looked on men around them. We think you will find many such,—careworn, careless, idle, envious specimens of humanity, whose chief delight—which is also their misery—is to talk and grind their teeth against those who, having been successful in their labours, and who also, in the imaginations of these misfortunate ones, appear to have been in some strange way the authors of their poverty and ruin. Perhaps the fortunate—that is, the industrious, clear-

mindful, successful—man has got some property of the idle one for which he has been duly paid; but no matter. The idle fellow will say, ‘Ay, I set him up; he got rich by me.’ So the man who did well is made answerable for the misery which the idler should attribute to himself. This is an evil, but one not likely to be got rid of till many people become more industrious or less envious.

ENOUGH BETTER THAN PLENTY WITH VEXATION.

We may now, however, turn our attention to the statement by Solomon, that a man who has just enough for his wants is in a better condition than he who has both hands full of the world’s goods, if any vexation prey on him. We must take this in connection with the previous one, and say he is better off, for one reason especially, viz., he is not subject to that envy which follows the very successful man. As a matter of fact, we know that this is so. A man that has just enough, able to supply all his wants, whose industry has procured him food and raiment, and a home and comforts, is above want and beneath envy. He is neither watched by bailiffs nor by thieves. The man of grand success, looking back to the time when he was in just such a position, may sigh and say, My former days were better than these. I was something like happy then. I

am not so now ; I have to bear the envies now ; I have too many cares now ; I have not merely to work—my mind labours ; I have travail.

THE CASTLE AND SKELETON.

The doctrine here is, riches, success, magnificence are of less worth than a medium condition, if one can at the same time secure content and freedom from excessive toil. This doctrine will be acquiesced in abstractly, but by no means as a practical faith. Most people will hold by the grand castle, whatever skeleton may be within some of its chambers. Any amount of discontent we will bear and any labour endure, if we can only make a sensation. Why, even the poor miserable fellow who folds his hands and eats his own flesh, thinks that he would do great things—no doubt he actually would suffer many things, for he is used to that—if he only were in the grand condition of him whom he envies. The contented man who has only plenty would hardly make a bargain to sacrifice his content for the show of grandeur, but he would risk the change with the hope of retaining his peace along with the newly acquired riches,—and he might. Many do. More do not. But in regard to those who do not, we may certainly affirm with Solomon, nor will it be seriously denied by any, that ‘better is an handful with

quietness, than both hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.'

The whole teaching here may be summed up in a few words: Successful labours do not bring un-mixed happiness, for they excite envies; idleness is still worse, for it is followed by poverty, and prepares the way for envy and other bad passions to prey upon the soul. The happiness of our condition is not dependent for increase on the increase of this world's goods. One man who has content with little, is better off than another who has much without it. Travail when excessive is not remunerative, though it should be paid the wages of abundance. And we may come to the conclusion, that no outward state is indicative of inward happiness: that is a plant which is neither sown by labour, nor cultured by commerce, nor developed by riches. It will grow as well or as badly in the cabin, the cottage, and the castle. It is rather a plant of the heavenly Father's planting, of the culture of Christ, growing under the influences of the Spirit.

Ah! we are surely going too far and too fast. Well, perhaps we are for any premises laid down so far in this discourse, save that, as we were made for happiness, and we do not seem to get it in the world of riches, we might probably conclude that we shall have it from that other world, that kingdom of grace

and of God which has come down among us. But as this might be thought too much to infer, let us remember that Paul spoke as though he had in this way found content; for we find him saying, 'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'

Those who have their all here—who have no faith in immortality—while they must seek above all things that they may enjoy, the very fact that they are so earnestly pursuing pleasure will hurt their enjoyment of it. It is possible to be calm and contented for a little time if we have an eternity of bliss before us; but if only death or misery, who could be content? In view of the uses of affliction as preparatives for heaven, we may well say, 'Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

RICHERS OF SOUL.

There is a kind of riches of which we are very careless, and but little envious,—the riches of the soul. The riches of the soul! To be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, to have citizenship in the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, to have assurance—not the assurance of bonds and leases—that eternal life is ours, to have in our very possession the foretastes of that happiness which springs from communion with God, the certain seals of His love, to know that the life we are living is that divine life, the principles of which have been produced in us by the very presence and Spirit of God; to be thus assured that we are rich, though we have not where to lay our head; to be God's anointed kings and priests through eternity,—this is indeed to be very rich. But how little care do we give to these things, and how little do we value those who possess them! And yet here envies sometimes invade. Those who have such riches are sometimes treated as mere spiritual pretenders. We have the excuse for this, that indeed there are many hypocrites in the world. In sad experience that is true. You will see men who pretend to the possession of these riches, not only eager for the possession of this world's goods, but

acting unjustly and untruthfully that they may gain them. The days of Jesus had no monopoly of the devourers of widows' houses, nor of sepulchres whited by the shows of piety, enclosing the bones of the dead. We have still a goodly number of such in our churches. From time to time the fair seemings of religion are shrivelled up, and the ghastly realities of vice made visible. The cloak is still an article used in religious dress, to cover the rents in the interior vestments of character. Many a man of pretentious piety is trading on fictitious capital. Many a one of our religious swells makes his appearance on the income of forgery. We admit all that can be said against such. We admit even that it is right to scrutinize all profession. 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.' But we need not carry our scepticism so far as to suppose that there is no real piety because there are many pretenders. There are honest men, though there be many swindlers; there is real capital, though there be many bogus schemes; and so is there a large number of those who are possessors of heavenly riches,—men of knowledge, and Christian experience, and piety, and prayer, and truth, and benevolence,—men rich in faith and the labours of love,—men whose souls are beautiful and wealthy, and who never can be made poor, even in the re-

volutions of ages. Now, do men envy such? Well, they do—in this way. They don't want their riches—not they. If they did, they might have them, for the capital of pious, holy character is capable of unbounded increase. There is only so much gold and property in the world. But the Bank of Righteousness is unbounded in its accommodations. Still, no doubt, there is application required, and a use in spiritual commerce to be made of the heavenly treasure. But not only is there an antipathy to labour, there is no desire for the spiritual products. Why, then, should the spiritually rich know envies? Because they are a standing rebuke to those who are spiritually poor. Every good man is himself a rebuke to every bad one. The benevolent man does not need to open his mouth in reproof of the stingy, covetous one. He has only to give, that he may earn the mean man's hate. The man of true heart is in some sense the scourge of the selfish. Purity throws a light which reveals the hideousness of all vileness. It is easy, then, to see how, although men are not envied for their spiritual riches in the same sense as the rich in this world, that yet in another they are. The wicked, the irreligious, do not like to see the splendours of character which show the dimness and meanness of their own. This envy had as much to do with the crucifixion of the

Son of God as all the charges on which He was put to death. These were but the occasion of His crucifixion. What did Annas and Caiaphas care though He should become a King? what fear had they of the ruin of their beautiful temple? what even did they care for His blasphemy, that He was the Son of God? What they disliked worse than all was, that He was indeed a King among men, dwarfing all who were around Him into littleness. What they disliked was His divine life, evidential of His divine Sonship. It was His purity that raised their envy, because it illustrated their unholy deeds; He was guilty of showing that all the riches of temples profaned, and priesthoods that were venal, and pharisaisms that forgot the great matters of the law to attend to minute points of observance, were worthless trash. Now, no man who fancies he is rich, and passes for rich, and has the respect arising from being rich, will be much obliged to you for revealing the hideous secret that he, if all were known, is a miserable beggar. But this is what Jesus did, and this is what in measure the apostles did, and so earned their martyr's crown; and this is what every good, holy man does, who comes into contact with baseness and unworthiness. The truth is, we are all angry with those who are spiritually rich, till we have determined by the grace of God to

become spiritually rich ourselves. When that is the case, there may still be the lurking jealousies and envies which belong to our human nature while here, as though we did not get our due appreciation, which is quite likely ; as though we had not an appropriate place in the honours and respect of our fellow-men ; and hence the bickerings and envies and harsh judgments among those who are confessedly religious. It indeed argues a very high attainment in the divine life, to be able to say, like John, without even a spice of envy, ' He must increase, but I must decrease ;' and like Paul, ' So then, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein do rejoice, and will rejoice.' To this spirit we would desire to attain. All low ambitions we would bid away from us. But to be rich in faith, love, and holiness, we would bend all our energies, that should we even altogether fail in this life, we may yet be received into everlasting habitations.

XII.

THE LONELY ONE.

‘Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one alone, and there is not a second ; yea, he hath neither child nor brother : yet is there no end of all his labour ; neither is his eye satisfied with riches ; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good ? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one ; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow : but woe to him that is alone when he falleth ; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat : but how can one be warm alone ? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him ; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.’—ECCLES. iv. 7–12.

THE wise man returns from his last mental excursion, in which we accompanied him, in viewing the vexations of envy and poverty, to consider another phase of vanity under the sun,—that of the lonely man labouring, not for wife or child or friend, but for self alone, fearing expense, laying up wealth, increasing his goods, but all this apparently purposeless and objectless. ‘Neither saith he, For whom do I labour and bereave my soul of good ? This is also vanity, and a sore travail.’

The loneliness of the wifeless, childless, friendless

man hovering over him in his work, the cheerless nature of his surroundings, the privation to which he voluntarily subjected himself, led Solomon naturally to speak of the advantages of copartnery in the various affairs of life,—a better reward for labour in combination than on the individual plan, assistance ready in cases of accident or distress, comfort and counsel to warm in a cold world, help in war ; —all this being presented in the simplest form of combination,—the union of two, and yet a further complexity being anticipated in the threefold cord. This is the usual form of social life,—in marriage, in business, in friendship. Companionship is everywhere sought by man ; counsel is everywhere needed. No man is in himself complete. He needs some one to supply deficiencies which he feels, and is ready to repay the kindness by supplying the defects of others.

CAUSES OF LONELINESS.

The case of the solitary man is indeed sorrowful. It is only when we are in unamiable moods that we would be much alone. There are, of course, times and seasons, when private meditation is useful and sweet ; but continuous retirement, avoidance of society, betrays the unbalanced mind, the growth of a rooted sorrow. Each case of melancholic abstrac-

tion has its own explanation. Sometimes it is inherent in the constitution from childhood, has not been striven against, rather has been cherished, through a feeling of pride or vanity, that those around are not so good as the moping creature. Sometimes it has, after birth in constitutional vanity, received its baptism of suffering from some minister of disappointment,—a blighted hope, an unreturned love ; sometimes it is nurtured by some criminal habit ; sometimes friendship has betrayed, and left only wretchedness behind ; sometimes death has taken away the joy of the heart and the delight of the eyes ; sometimes a great misfortune has come like an avalanche, thundering on the house, out of which he has just been able to crawl with life, regretful almost that life has been preserved ; sometimes it is Job sitting in his ashes, when his property has been swept away, when his children have been slain ; sometimes it is Absalom, who has no child to perpetuate his name, expending his fortune and affection on a pillar ; sometimes it is a Goethe or a Byron pouring forth sorrow in song, and hurling anathemas against a world, some member or two of which may have wounded their pride, but which, as a whole, has done them no wrong ; sometimes it is an old father who has cut off his only son, who has in some, perhaps not very criminal, particular dis-

obeyed him, and who now goes to endow an hospital, not so much as a work of benevolence, as a way in which he may wreak his vengeance on him on whom he had previously lavished all his love. This is he,—this childless child of sorrow, this solitary one, who has given himself to labour, to lay up, to secure the power of riches, without the ability to use them for any useful purpose,—whose case Solomon commiserates, whose example furnishes him with another reason for crying out against the world as a scene only of vanity and vexation of spirit.

NECESSITY OF OCCUPATION.

It is very frequently the case when a person has met with a great disappointment or suffered a great loss, a loss that was irreparable, a heart loss—for what are mercantile losses and bankruptcies to those which bring insolvencies of the affections?—that, the heart being necessitated to set itself on something, he seeks in labour to deaden memory; is probably more laborious than if he had not experienced the loss, though now he has no one to toil for; and though he has far more than is necessary for self, still he works and accumulates, as though he had never so many dependent upon him. How is this to be explained? What shall be said if we should affirm that it arises from the necessity of

occupation,—a necessity to him who would be happy in any case, but one which increases with him who has no one to care for? He who has some one to love may endure to be idle; he who is all alone must have every minute filled up. That toil which love undertakes to support the being loved and trusted, is endured and intensified by the desire to fill up the great desert which desertion or death has made in the soul. No one can be happy without action, but especially can he not be happy without strict employment who has anything to brood over. You may for a while keep your windows shut, and close the door of your chamber against all intrusion, and make the week a continuous Sabbath; but if you should, because the stroke is great and the sorrow overwhelming, continue this isolation and inaction, you will be on the fair road to the domains of insanity. Better let in the blessed sun to cheer your eye and heart; better go forth into the world, and see if there be not in it something to cheer you—sympathetic voices and kind looks; but especially try if there be not some good useful employment for which you are fitted. It may be that you have no occasion to do so for any advantage which further acquisitions will be to you; but if you find advantage in the employment itself, that is a sufficient reason for activity. God has formed us for action;

and we will find, in complying with the designs of heaven, peace and contentment.

We are to observe that Solomon thought the case an evil one, not so much because the man was *labouring and undergoing toil*, as depriving his soul of good, and all for no near or dear relative or friend. We have to speak a little to these two points.

ASCETICISM.

There is an amount of deprivation of the soul of good which becomes an evil. It is quite right that a man should enjoy the fruit of his labour. Those who have made vows of poverty have often found that they have made a theoretical mistake, which they were bound practically to remedy, by taking as much enjoyment as possible. But at the same time abstemiousness adds to the zest of enjoyment. The true epicure is the laborious temperate man. Your gourmands miss the highest luxuries of the table; your men of pleasure are generally the most miserable men on earth. Your hard-working, temperate man has the blessing of a good appetite. The taste of all is to him good. In depriving the soul of good, we sometimes attain good. True, we may go too far. The poor man may suffer harm from want, and the miser may suffer privation from will. Some miserable self-starver, probably, had

met Solomon's eye ; but it may be that he thought more deeply of privations than there was any necessity for. We all know that our requirements very much depend on our habits. A king must be greatly puzzled as to how not merely poor tenement house people live, but how respectable peasants and shopkeepers support life on small pittances. The secret lies in habit. But very little is required to support nature—ay, to feel all the highest delights which food and raiment afford. We have eaten and drunk and slept as comfortably in a log hut as in the finest house we ever sojourned in ; and those who are accustomed to such things have keen enjoyments.

THE LONELY MAN'S LABOUR NOT LOST.

But what struck Solomon as hard was, that he should deprive his soul of good when he had no one to enjoy it for him, either at present or prospectively—neither friend nor heir. It might have suggested itself to him that this man might do much good to society by his activity, and that his labour was not all lost. What he had acquired, the wealth which his labour had accumulated, would remain for the good of society in some form, and would pass into other hands. In this point of view the evil vanishes. Each man in the nation is like a bee in the hive, as

far as work goes. Many may work in construction of the house or the cell. The only difference is, that among mankind each one aims at having a home for self and family. Yet by this mode the general result is the same as in the colony of the bee. The advantage of one becomes that of all. We might also observe, that any one who is never so lonely may make life full of good works. We do not know any one who is in such a grand condition to benefit the world as the lonely man. He has nothing to prevent his sympathies from taking their course to the worthiest objects. And indeed we find that many of those who have done the most important work for man, have been men who had neither wife, child, nor brother. Gibbon, the writer of that great work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Hume, who wrote the *History of England*, were both childless. Columbus, if I mistake not, was without family. Pope, Coleridge, and Wordsworth were unmarried. We find that many of those who have done the world rich service, were men who were alone. Their works, however great, were done for and on behalf of humanity. We think that it is a good thing for some active men to be alone. It would seem as though it were less hard to do the right, if one had no fear for persecution of others on account of it. It is said that

when a man has a family, he has given pledges to society for good behaviour; that is, a man will be afraid to do what may bring him under the ban of law or society, lest his family should suffer as well as he; and so the ties of family, too, will make it in certain circumstances less easy for him to speak unwelcome truth. It is easier to follow Christ when one has no wife or sister or brother, whom he may be called on to hate for the sake of the gospel.

JESUS THE LONELY WORKER.

In this connection we cannot forbear to observe that Jesus Christ, upon the principle of judgment laid down in this observation of Solomon, in His deprivation of His soul of good, in His great and incessant labours, must appear an inexplicable character. All must seem vanity and vexation of spirit that He did; and yet He in His loneliness redeemed the world from vanity. Oh! what a glorious life was His; and all the more glorious because He had no selfish object to serve. The very fact that He did not work for inheritance to be left to children, but for the good of man,—that His labours were for the labouring, His sorrows were for the suffering, His death for the dying, and His life that all might live,—is the grandest thing

in all our world's history, procuring even the redemption of man from ruin.

But it is apparently from a selfish standpoint that Solomon views this matter. That a man be able to enjoy fully, he must have some objects for whom he may work and suffer. Solomon thinks the man must be unhappy if he have not these, the usual appanages of life; and so, no doubt, he will be, if he be not able to find objects of kindness whom he may take to his heart; or at least so fill up his life with work, that he will not have time for vain regrets.

UNITY OF THE RACE.

How beautiful is that arrangement of Heaven by which the whole human race is formed into a unity; by which the father, by his interest in his child, becomes interested in futurity; by which friendship tends to cement society; by which, in the division of labour, men become helpful to each other; by which weakness finds aid in strength; by which copartnery builds up business, and combination defeats enmity! In the panorama of life, how sweet to point out beauties to a sympathizing mind! In its journey, how it increases confidence and dissipates fear, to have one near to help if dangers threaten, or difficulties are to be surmounted! In

all this we see the benevolence and the wisdom of Him who made us. Such arrangements as these redeem the world from the charge of vanity. It is the disarrangement of this order that produces vexation of spirit. Man, by breaking up these arrangements, sins and suffers. We do indeed find these arrangements more or less broken, so that we may say that man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity, when considered with reference only to time; but when we take in his whole being, prospective as well as present, when we think of the present as preparatory to the active being which is to be active for evermore, vanity ceases to be our thought of it. We see a tiny plant hardly able to resist the cold of the coming winter, but destined to become a tree of the grandest proportions, and fit for some great and noble work. And although death may come, what of that? 'For if we be planted in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.'

COMPANIONSHIP.

Companionship is good. If you are travelling, one is able to help the other up if he falls. We know what it is to go through the wood alone in the night; by the grounds supposed to be haunted alone; by the lair of the wild beasts alone. We

would rather have for company the coarsest man, though a mere stranger, when the darkness is dense, or the storm has overtaken us, than be alone—provided we do not think him a thief or a robber. We know not how soon we shall need help—and to have help at hand! There are some great perils in which, indeed, companionship brings no comfort because it can bring no help—as when the ship is about to sink with its hundreds of human beings, and those wild waters are about to take by the throat and mercilessly strangle every one. But while there is yet hope of saving the ship, what comfort to have many brave hands at the pumps, and voices to encourage us to work! Companionship here is good; that is, still provided those who are with us are not craven, fearful creatures, fit to paralyse, not to work. Yes, companionship is good if the companion be good. Everything has its dark as well as its bright side, and so has this subject. The fearful heart causeth fear. Hence, in providing against the perils of loneliness, we need to be watchful and wary. In this world there are bad men and cowards. Both are to be shunned on the journey of life. Better, if we fall, to rise up by our own power, than be strangled or robbed by the hand that has helped us up.

Companionships, too, need to be formed, not only

with a view to physical help, but moral and spiritual aid. The good or the evil which they do us physically is as nothing comparatively. One may assist another by adding his strength, but we can actually give, and do communicate our moral strength to those with whom we associate. We give to those who love us our qualities, our ideas, our habits. The basis of our original nature may remain the same, but all else has been taken up from our surroundings, and become incorporated into our being. We are to a large extent what we have been made, and we may see our work in the web of other men's character. 'No man liveth to himself.' You cannot sit down to the loom of life, and say, Now I will weave me a habit in which shall be nothing of other men's views and opinions. No; a thousand threads of various texture and colour, spun by many hands, you find speeding across, and mingling themselves with what you thought was your own peculiar manufacture; and when the varied pattern is completed, the lights and shadows will appear to have been dyed by other hands than our own. It has been said that Pandora had a gift given her by each of the gods; but more truly may we say of those with whom we associate, we are endowed by them. From one we have this wisdom, from another that folly. How important, then, is com-

panionship and surroundings! We would therefore ask, before we decide that companionship is good, Who are they that are to form the list of friends?

TRADE PARTNERSHIP.

In regard to copartnery in trade, it is the same. If I join in a partnership with a man who is a wild speculator, or who is careless in his business, or idle, I shall surely come to grief. Instead of having a better reward for my labour, I shall have a worse. It is so, too, in moral and spiritual matters. Wild speculation is a vain thing, and those should be avoided who embark in it. But we would not be misunderstood. Legitimate speculation is always good and necessary to the merchant, and so it is to the moralist and the Christian. There is nothing worse than stagnation, either in trade or religion. The sailor would rather have a storm any time than that dead calm when the sail flaps idly against the mast. It is always good to think—to think for one's self—to think, not as the market thinks, but as the state of affairs warrants; and it is good to have those about us who think, who do not fear to face truth, and look into her calm eye. But we may meet with those who will direct us away from her, and under pretence of freedom may lead to licentiousness. All copartnery with such is to be

avoided. It will be of small account to us that we should be upheld in our stumbling by some one who would lead us after every *ignis fatuus* of speculation. Small profit, too, is there in such searches. But no companionship is more profitable than that which will direct to the discovery of noble truths, and give us the necessary guidance and help while we are in quest of them. Even with such, we must seek direction from that Spirit which leadeth to all truth, and discovers to us truth by making us pure and good, by rendering us like Him.

The society of the careless and of the idle, too, should be avoided in all such companionships, whether in the things of the world or of religion. Diligence in business should go with the service of the Lord. Partnerships made with the idle and negligent, will bring even the industrious to grief. In married life, extravagance or carelessness on the part of one may destroy the prosperity of both. If one blade of the scissors be blunt, no sharpness of the other will make a clean cut. One broken wheel will mar all the going of the machine. We must see, then, to the edge and force of those with whom we associate, or our exertions may be all vain.

And another thought. Let us live so that others who are wise may seek us as their com-

panions. Like gravitates towards like. The companion of fools is so because he is himself a fool. As the rich seek the company of the rich, and the poor consort with the poor, so those of good morals seek those of sterling worth. Remember, too, that while the winds scatter the chaff, the wheat lies in the golden heap. Ruin is the end of folly, but God's garner is the place where the good and wise ultimately repose.

This toil, then, is good, and this sorrow is the sphere of sympathy, and whatever aids this toil and lightens this sorrow is also good; and among those things which do so, we have referred to marriage, friendship, copartnery. With regard to the first of these, we shall quote a short poem recently published, showing the helpfulness of that blessed relation :

' Side by side, in the bright morn of childhood,
When we were young,
And, sharing grief for a beloved one taken,
Her requiem sung.

' Side by side, when riper years advancing
Bid graces bloom,
And from the dead a bud of life uprising
Flowered o'er the tomb.

' Side by side, in the dark hour of trial,
To help and cheer,—
The sorrow-freighted barque o'er trouble's sea
To guide and steer.

' Side by side, in the glad scenes of pleasure,
Our joys to share ;
Dissevered, ever grieving ; but united,
All gladness there.

' Side by side—our hearts together twining,
Mingle in one ;
One aim, one object, and one expectation,
One, only one.

' Side by side, in adoration kneeling,
One prayer ascends ;
One Everlasting hears, and in His mercy
One answer sends.

' Side by side, throughout life's day declining,
Till sinks our sun,
Through good report and evil, ever trusting—
Our hearts still one.

Side by side, within the grave's dark chamber,
Waiting to rise,
When the loud trump of universal waking
Shall rend the skies.

' Side by side, in everlasting union
With saints above,
Hymning the pean of eternal goodness
And deathless love.'

XIII.

THE WISE CHILD AND THE FOOLISH KING.

‘Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king.’—
—ECCLES. iv. 13.

THE custom of Eastern sovereigns, who, as a safeguard of power, kept the prospective heirs to their thrones in places of confinement, lest by factions taking advantage of discontents excited by tyranny, they should find themselves dethroned, and some other of the royal blood elevated in their room, is here referred to. David seems to have treated his children liberally, and hence the rebellions of Absalom and Adonijah. We do not find from the histories of the subsequent kings who reigned over Israel and Judah, whether the custom was much attended to or not. It probably was. No doubt Solomon had many examples among the neighbouring potentates, of a strict surveillance, amounting to imprisonment, of those who were so related to the sovereign that they might fairly aspire, if opportunity offered, to reign, when any series of impru-

dences rendered the reigning prince obnoxious to the populace,—some examples, too, of the bad effects of such seclusion from the world of those who were afterwards called to reign, in their folly and imprudence, and resistance to salutary advice. He thinks a wise child is better, has a better lot in life, is of more advantage to society, even though born in a humble station. The one, so far from fulfilling the objects for which thrones are erected, subverted all those objects, producing poverty in his kingdom, preventing progress among his subjects by his foolish and tyrannical rule ; the other, having when young attained a wise disposition—a disposition to acquire knowledge, and to make his life useful—was preparing to do good to society, to add to the world's wealth, to set a good example to others—an honour to his parents, and a blessing to all. ‘ Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign ; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor,’—that is, through his misrule.

GOOD OR EVIL INFLUENCE OF RULERS.

The prosperity of nations is largely dependent on their rulers. This is especially the case with nations governed by despots ; but it is also so in a measure

with even the most limited monarchies and the most enlightened republics. Hence the history of the world is in great measure that of its rulers. They are the springs of national life, or dead seas in which only noxious things can breed and live. They send refreshing rain, or burn into sterility the fertile soils,—mainsprings moving to evil or to good the national machinery,—now grinding out for it the arts of peace, now breaking it up by futile wars, —then, broken themselves, leaving the wheels of social life to go on with their reserve power, till they may again be driven forward with a new regal force, or fall into hopeless inaction without it. The king's influence, felt particularly by his courtiers and officers, is by them communicated to other circles, till, passing away from peerages and landed proprietaries, it touches with its virtues or its vices the remotest peasantries and labourers. Men, women, and little ones, all are affected. Saul is wicked and foolish, and Philistia triumphs, not only over him and Jonathan, but over Israel on the mountains of Gilboa. David, who is in the main wise, and under whom Israel is built up, is in some things foolish, and the people suffer from the angel of the Lord. Solomon is a man of wisdom and of peace, and under him the arts flourish, and the temple is built, and commerce spreads her sails as far as India.

Rehoboam is foolish, and Israel is divided ; the two parts weakening one another by war, and becoming in turn the victims of Syria, Assyria, and Babylon. We may say that the captivity was the result of the folly of Rehoboam. History is full of such examples. England has been raised high by the wisdom, and brought low by the folly, of her sovereigns. The wise counsels of Elizabeth gave birth to a strength, prosperity, and enterprise, which the folly of the Stuarts could not wholly subvert. The wisdom and energy of Cromwell came to stay the falling state, and of William to prevent that ruin to which things were fast tending, through the madness of the second James. The mediocrity of the first of the Georges, the obstinacy of the third, and the libertinism of the fourth, have been prevented from accomplishing the whole evil to which they pointed, by the virtues, the womanly and motherly qualities, of a Victoria, and by the concealed wisdom of an Albert. The prosperity of certain periods of national life is thus very dependent on the wisdom of the sovereigns who may direct its affairs. The average power and ability of the nation are much the same, but the power of the headship is very various. A long succession of foolish princes will indeed sap the virtues as well as the prosperities of a people, and then ' a long farewell to greatness.' Under misrule,

Greece, the original home of poetry, eloquence, the arts, war, glory—everything that can elevate—has for many centuries been dead, sepultured, covered in with baseness, though it is indeed waking up latterly, but only through a galvanic action from the batteries of liberty and seething intellect all around. Spain, once so rich, so chivalrous, has by misrule descended into beggary and baseness. Over the far-off generations kings hold their sceptre,—if golden, enriching them; if leaden, oppressing them. They are the fates who spin in succession the threads of destiny for the nations. Well might Solomon say, ‘Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king.’

The king is the father to the people, the past is father to the present, and the present is the father of the future. Adam is the first king, ruling us as he ruled himself—badly. He, the first, is still being developed in us, the middle, and will go on to the last.

INFLUENCE OF THE PAST UPON THE PRESENT.

The ages gone by are responsible to us, and we are responsible to the coming centuries. But those to whom it is given to mould society, to give it fashion and colour, are specially responsible. Not kings alone, but priests and scholars and philo-

sophers, who also are in their way kings, are responsible to the present and to the future. See what Moses did for Israel, and for us. We still feel the influence of Solomon and of Isaiah. The thinkings of Jewish prophets mould our thoughts. Take away the apostles, and what a blank! Suppose the King of truth never to have come, and where should we be? Somehow we are but Judah and Israel developed, with some mingling of Greece and Rome. Talk of blessings and curses descending to the third and fourth generation: they descend to the fortieth, and four hundredth. We yet hear the hiss of the serpent—the great fiend laughter that burst upwards from the pit when our ancestor fell. Thus Calvinism stares at us everywhere from the windows of the antique towers of history: square and angular, ghostly and ungainly, but yet a reality that will not stand out of view. It has a lesson, too, for us. It is saying, ‘No man liveth to himself, no man dieth to himself.’ It bids us put aside that fiction, that ‘the foolish man harms no one but himself.’ The voices that are waiting in the dim vestibules of the future try to say, ‘Do us no harm.’ Thus speak they specially to kings and other great ones, who think they were born with substantial royal rights, but with abstractions of duty,—for enjoyment simply. God has said to them, I have given you

great honours, riches, glory, state, as rewards for great and noble toil. You are charged with the destinies of the generation living and of those unborn, and to support you in the royal work I give you royal rewards. Be not foolish, but wise. Hear the admonitions of wisdom. In you are the destinies of posterity.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY REMAINS.

Our destinies are thus so dependent on our ancestry and nationality, that we may be almost tempted to deny all individual responsibility. When we see great armies put in motion to carry fire and sword into the midst of an unoffending people, the soldiers having no election of their own in the matter, we conclude that it were hardly possible to bring responsibility for the conduct or crimes of the war home to any of that vast array—at least for anything done by the commands of superior officers, although it may not be hard to bring home to individuals the crimes that are done contrary to order, or without order; and when one is surrounded with influences, in infancy moulding the very fundamental principles of morals, and by influences during the whole time that our character is being built up, when parents, teachers, rulers, all combine to make us what we are, whatever we affirm

of particular responsibility, certainly we must make very great allowances and distinctions. The man who is, by antecedent and surrounding good influences, kept pure and right, what is the amount of deduction to be made from his merit? The man who has, by similar depressing influences, been made evil, what amount of allowance should be made for him? Probably we may say we need not go into that question at all. Some may be inclined to take and treat men just as they affect us, without the slightest reference to responsibility, or its opposite. We love birds of beautiful plumage and sweet song, but we hate beasts of prey and birds of rapine; although there is no merit on account of his plumage to the peacock, or of his voice to the thrush, and although necessity compels the tiger and lion to rend their innocent prey. We love those beautiful harmonious birds, and we trap and pet them; we fear and hate these things with dreadful fangs and claws, and we kill them. But can we so class men, and then, according to their nature, honour them or kill them according as they manifest a nature suitable to our delights, or contrary to our interests? No, we always go deeper than that. We say to the man, You did wrong, you should have done right; or, You have done well, we honour you. We never think of bringing home conviction to the conscience

of the lion. But are we right in doing so in the case of men nurtured in crime, and taught to call evil good, and good evil? Yes; for with regard to the great questions of morals, no amount of teaching will make a man really blind to their fundamental distinctions. Right will assert itself as right, and wrong will slink into the darkness as wrong, whatever may have been our teachings. It is simply not possible to subvert their radical nature. In the haunts of bandits men continue to see moral subjects pretty much as in states and kingdoms. We also find that the truth in regard to moral questions has a tendency to show itself to him who seeks it, however others may have tried to hide it from the soul.

Our depravity shows itself in the rejection of the truth when exhibited, not in the difficulty of discovering it in the darkness. Evermore, notwithstanding all antenatal and contemporary influences, the true relations of things get themselves presented to the soul for approval; and according as they are received and approved, or are rejected and trampled upon, is the moral state of that soul. Men in a dark age and in a dark country may be held as irresponsible for many of their evil deeds, but in regard to many more they see their criminality; their thoughts accuse or excuse them. Each man that cometh into the world is enlightened with

a sight of the true light, and the condemnation is, that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. There is no misrule of persons, no falsities of teachers, no universality of custom that can altogether prevent the soul from sometime beholding the beautiful forms of truth and virtue, and from making a personal election, or rejection of them. However much we may pity the people whom ages of misrule have not only robbed of material wealth, but of just preceptions of truth and virtue, still we hold that some capacities are left them of recuperation and of responsibility. Each man feels this. We suppose there is no savage that can divest himself of it. All think they could be better than they are. Are they wrong in this conception? We trow not. We are not, then, mere links in a chain of destiny forged by the hand of circumstance. We are links, but we have something to do with our own weight and strength and tempering. Others may have built the forge and supplied the fuel, and procured the ore, and puddled it, and rolled it into the bar. All this has been done for the smith; but the time comes when he is to act for himself, to blow the bellows, to see that the iron is duly heated, to hammer it, and weld it. Is the smith not responsible for the link? Partly, you say—indeed in great measure; not for the whole quality, but

still for its strength, as far as that depended not on the anterior excellence or badness of the iron, but for the heating and hammering surely. Let us do him justice. Let us do ourselves justice too. Much has been prepared of the basis of character, and yet the heating and hammering are our own. While we condemn or applaud our teachers, our kings, our ancestors, let us see that the duty still incumbent on ourselves is so performed that our link may be good, capable of bearing the mightiest strain, not a poor rotten thing, deceiving that entrusted to its holding, wrecking great causes.

WE HAVE NO EXCUSE.

In the present day we are enlightened. The men of royal intellect have been wise, and our kings, to do them justice, will bear fair comparison with those of past days. While the wisdom of sovereigns, politicians, and philosophers has illuminated our paths, we shall be all the more guilty should we fall. What excuse shall we make if we become not wise and strong and free? It has often happened that nations did not improve their privileges. The candlestick has been removed from the castle of indolence. The fetter has been forged for liberty. Religion despised has gone in sackcloth through the land weeping. All this has come sometimes,

not from the follies of its kings, but from the madness of its people. History teaches us that, while rulers have been wicked, sometimes people have been unworthy of their guides. The princes of wisdom have been frequently slain by those whom they would educate and save. An old and obstinate people that will no longer be advised, is worse than an old and obstinate king. There is ruin before both. Better, however, that the king should perish than the nation.

THE WISE CHILD.

Let us leave the aged king and his court, that we may seek the wise child in the cottage. We have made a change—from the glare of the palace to the green fields and the lilies. Perhaps so; but we may not have wandered so far. In the lawn abutting on the royal grounds are plenty of children trying to play. There are some of them that we would say are sharp, with great insight into things. Some are bad—already bad. Perhaps you have seen gardens amid many chimneys. When the manufactories were dense, the smoke and the colly had covered the flowers. There were roses and tulips; but oh, how dingy! Everything had an ashy, mourning look. It seems lost labour to try to grow flowers here. Yet it is sometimes done; and it is

very cheering to those human creatures that must also live among the chimneys. And so those children gladden the eye, even when we pass through the streets of the great city where also the obstinate old king holds his court; and now and then you will find one singularly beautiful soul in the freshness of youth, which even the sooty moral atmosphere has not besmirched. It is wise—has need of wisdom; for perhaps some near relative is a fool, a drunken fool, and the little child leads him from drunkenness and misery and death. We have many such instances. A child at Sabbath school has become wise with God-given wisdom, and has made wise foolish parents. Their own little child has led them—away from the dark pitfalls, away from the haunts of sin, away from bitter quarrels, to family peace, family enjoyment, to the peace of God which passeth understanding. And the child, having with its own sweet disposition, and open truthfulness, and infantile fearlessness, and innocent courage, brought back those who had given it birth to a new life, has been also taken away by death. Its life is given for the world in which it moved, and which it has most say it has saved. It was poor, but by its wisdom it has made many rich. Better than an old foolish king! We should think so. He curses nations; the child

blessees some poor people. He sows the land with poverty ; the poor child cultivates the fruits of divine grace and love in a little blighted corner of humanity, making it rejoice and blossom as the rose. Let the good child, the wise child, come forth, that we may do it reverence, out of the low, dark cabin, into the sunlight, out among the flowers. The poor child is badly dressed : that is nothing. She is the daughter of the King, all glorious within. The garments of her character are wrought with embroideries of gold. She has a crown that shall shine with gems when all earthly sceptres are broken ; and there are many little wise children, her companions, who are following her to the presence of the glorious King of kings, who said of them when He was down here, ' Of such is the kingdom of God.'

So wisdom excelleth folly as light excelleth darkness. One ray of the beautiful light is worth a whole kingdom of darkness ; one gleam of wisdom is worth a royal life of folly ; and the good disposition is better than any amount of despotic power :

' Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.'

Thus it appears that no station in life can prevent us from attaining worth, and doing good, and

winning fame. It is easy, apparently, for princes and great ones to become useful: perhaps all is not easy that looks easy, and all is not hard that looks difficult. In lowly life there are things worth looking after. It was once supposed by novelists that high life alone was worth notice. Those who have gone down to the lanes and cottages, have fared best latterly in that line. They have found there not only vices, but virtues. If they have found poverty and suffering, they have sometimes found a wealth of affection and rightheartedness they had failed to meet in many grander scenes. Poverty does not always blight the soul. No doubt its tendency is that way, and such frequently are its effects. But this tendency may be resisted. Say not, 'Because I am young, what can I do? because I am poor, what can I do?' If you are young, you have many advantages, which will all be taken away by the coming years—youth's innocence, its ingenuousness, its confidingness. Improve these before experience comes to blight them. If you are poor, your natural place is where there is much suffering to relieve, and much good to do. The conventionalities of society do not shut you out from the circles of misery. Do not grieve that your way is not open into circles set,—where all that is visible is showy and false and hollow—

where they lie to one another, and call it compliment—where they lie about one another, and yet are dear friends. You may have much happiness, you may do much good, and you may be a true follower of Jesus, though you have not where to lay your head. The poor child may thus overtop the aged king.

DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF YOUTH.

It is a sad reflection when we begin to get old, that we have lost the morning of our day and its noon, or at least that we have spent many of its hours idly, or to poor advantage. And there is a sadder reflection, viz., that we have not been fitting, but unfitting ourselves for the true duties of life; that we have been building our character on false foundations, which we find are sinking, and thus rending our whole structure. That the young may not have future unavailing regrets, let them now look well to it that they build on the foundations of true wisdom. We do not mean learning, for a very learned man may be a very great fool. It is not the knowledge which we have, but the knowledge which we turn to practical account, that becomes wisdom,—to such practical account that we shall not be stripped of the fruit of all our labours, but shall have our good works following us, not to the

grave as mourners, but going with us rejoicing up to the throne, and into the inheritance of the blessed.

And once more let us observe, that fitness for office is that which constitutes its ornament. The king is not honourable because he sits on a throne and holds a sceptre, and has palaces and guards, and can do his whole will. He is honourable only as he is fitted to discharge his duties well. If he be not fitted for government, far better he were not called to a throne. Let no man believe in his capacity to deceive—to make men think he is what he is not. Men will give you credit for a while ; but the day for payment comes round, and woe to him who allows his bill of character and capacity to be dishonoured ! Prepare yourselves to pay that you owe,—if you are in business, with business capacity ; or in trade, with good honest work ; or in teaching, with instructions for those who employ you ; or if in trust of any kind, with honesty. You may stick to office, and derive its emoluments ; but you will be bankrupt in the good opinion of others, and worse—in your own opinion.

LOSS OF THE WISE CHILD TO SOCIETY.

Finally, the loss of a poor wise child to society is a greater loss than that of a foolish old king by

death. The noise it will make will be very different. Lucien represents mankind as all hanging by the threads of fate above the earth,—some about touching it, others lifted a little way up, some higher, and so on till the last and highest stage, which is that of kings and other great personages; and so it comes to pass, that when the fate cuts the thread of any one, he makes a noise in proportion to his height: this one slips down without a sound, for his feet touch the earth; but there is another who makes a mighty noise, he has fallen so far. But the noise is in no proportion to the value of the life that is gone. The old king is well gone, if the nation do not come by a worse one; the poor man will be sadly missed by his widowed wife and orphan children; and the poor wise child will be badly missed, when its place is empty and its guidance is gone. Oh, there may be sincerer grief going to its grave than follows some grand court mournings! And it is right there should, for there is more real loss to humanity. But one thing is gladdening, that the blossoming child-wisdom will blow and bloom in a bright and glorious land; and though a little obscure corner of the earth is in mourning, there is joy with the angels, who have borne her away to the beautiful lands above.

XIV.

SNARES IN THE PATH OF PIETY.

‘Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools : for they consider not that they do evil.’—ECCLES. v. 1.

DUTY AND DANGER.

THERE are two things to be noticed : 1st, Danger connected with duty ; and, 2^d, Duty to be fulfilled in danger. The duty here referred to is that of attendance upon the house of God with a view to instruction and worship. The danger is, that we may, in this way of duty, yet slip and fall, and, even in our anxieties to fulfil one obligation, fail in the performance of another not less, if not more, important.

The way of duty is never unattended with danger. We may do too much or too little ; we may err in ignorance, we may err also through presumption. Duty may be performed in an official way, or in a spiritless way, or in an unspiritual way, or in a careless way, or in a formal way. It may be engaged in from an unworthy motive, as to make a

name, or to gratify an unworthy passion, or to make God our debtor, or to lay our fellow-men under an obligation. The modes in which it may be vitiated are numerous. If it escape this taint, it may feel the breath of that poison. Its path is amid gins and snares.

We might suppose that in the house of God one was not only in the way of duty, but in the way of safety. Not so. Snares lie in the path of him who would worship God in His own house. He cannot take a step which is wholly free from danger. As he goes thither, he may be beset with thoughts unworthy of his character as a worshipper; when he is in the very exercise of praise, or of prayer, or of hearing, what difficulties will he find opposing the full exercise of his faculties in the worship of his God! If we were to attempt to analyze the feelings and views of the worshippers of any congregation on any given Sabbath, we should present you with a strange medley—something like the stuff of which dreams are made, so incongruous, so absurd, that you would wonder how God could indeed so be worshipped. Look at the outward manifestations, and a glance at the inner field of thought and feeling.

We suppose it is hardly possible to avoid taking a quiet look round when we are seated, to see who is there and who is not there, and why such pews

are vacant, and what such and such persons of our acquaintance have on—whether an old or a new dress, whether also the old one is shabby, or the new one in good taste, and becoming. Still it cannot but strike one that this is not any necessary portion of the worship of God, and that the person who can avoid all this series of observation and remark will not be a less acceptable worshipper on account of the omission. Indeed one will rather be inclined to conclude that, if this line of observation is indulged in to a large extent, especially after the regular service is begun, it cannot fail to be detrimental to the spirit of true piety. I would also suggest to all such as may be inclined to this species of remark, that they ought to encourage early attendance on the service, that at least all this kind of critical mental exercise may be brought to a conclusion before the worship of God commences, for certainly on no account should the practice be tolerated while that worship or any of its parts is proceeding.

PRAISE.

When we are engaged in the exercise of praise, there are the following things observable. Critical ears and close lips, in some instances; in other cases, little correct comprehension of the meaning of the words, sound having taken the place of ideas,

instead of suggesting them and expanding them, and so raising our minds up to the God of our praise. The divine song is a lullaby, accompanied with dreams of various things which should not be permitted to mingle with our thoughts on the solemn occasion. God, His attributes, His perfections, His doings, His mercies, His love, are in the psalm, but they are, in many cases, not in the mind or the heart. During this portion of worship, the same observation on dress and manner and person of co-worshippers which was commenced at the entrance is still carried forward. We have need to keep our feet here, lest we fall into any of these errors, of criticism, of vacuity, of worldly thoughts, and of observation. Each of these things will vitiate our praise, and render it unacceptable to God.

PRAISE SHOULD BE SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS.

We may with much propriety consider in what way this exercise should be engaged in. The leaders in this department of worship should be children of God, fully imbued with a sense of the sacredness of their calling. Science in the music we hold to be highly valuable, and indeed to some extent essential to a proper leadership. Without melody and harmony the well-cultivated mind cannot be satisfied. We believe firmly that God loves the melo-

dious and the harmonious. He did not constitute the laws of music that they might be set at defiance. He did not render us capable of knowing them, and of feeling their power, without also intending that we should observe them, and that we should especially observe them when engaged in the praise of Him who constituted them. Knowledge, then, at least in degree, is essential to the form of praise. But there is another thing more deeply essential: it is, that the soul be in harmony with the exercise. That the soul be in harmony with the praise of God, it should be in harmony with God; it should be reconciled to Him; it should be in the present exercise of reconciled feelings to Him; it should be in harmony with the special subject of His praise which is embodied in the psalm, having a complete understanding of the same. Without these elements, it is impossible that the worship of praise can be acceptable either to God or to the true Christian. There will always be a felt inconsistency between the performance and the spirit of the performer.

ONE LAW FOR ALL.

There is but one law for the leader, and for those who are led. The precentor should be in as full harmony of soul with God as any of those who join in the service. There should be quite as much

propriety of behaviour in the choir as in the pew. Nay, if anything, it is more essential that the leaders of the service should be imbued with a spirit of devout reverence, than that it should be found elsewhere. Those whose especial office it is to lead, also give a tone to the whole of this service, and others will fall into the same spirit with that manifested by the leaders.

All music which is merely studied as a science—that is, as a thing of concord and the movement of time—is essentially defective. There must also be the correspondent harmony of feeling. Those singers who merely try to render their singing scientific, will ever fail to affect the hearts of the people. It is when feeling, sentiment—the feeling and sentiment of the words of song—are rendered in union with harmonious movement and concord of sound, that the performance attains to its true elevation. Every one should endeavour to become imbued with the deep meaning and spirit of the song of praise, which should also be rendered according to the laws of harmony, and then will we have true praise. Even the dead keys of the musical instrument can and ought to be made to feel, so to speak, and express the sentiments of the living soul which inspires the hand that touches them.

Our conclusion is, that we should learn the laws of music, and that we should also be imbued with the spirit of praise. The youthful generation should all be taught to praise God according to these laws, and at the same time should also cultivate feelings of devout reverence to that God who is the object of our praise.

THE SILENT ONES.

Some people do not themselves audibly sing. If this abstinence arises from a feeling that they are not qualified, either from want of voice or ear or cultivation, we have not much to object, provided they endeavour still to praise in spirit and truth. Others, however, who are well qualified, abstain that they may have opportunity to criticise. This is wrong. They are ready to hear, but the purpose is not good. It may be admitted that, to the highly cultivated musical taste, any violation of the laws of harmony is disagreeable; but when engaged in the service of God, this critical feeling should, as far as possible, be suppressed. There should be more attention given to the matter of the praise than to the manner of its utterance. The soul should try to get itself into harmony with the God of worship, rather than to feel offence against the mode of its performance; just as, in

hearing the preacher, there should be more attention to the weight of the truths uttered, than to the tones of voice, or the gestures, or the elegance of the expression. We are all liable to fail in our praise, from this critical spirit.

CRITICISM IN CAPTIVITY.

It is a grand thing to have such music in the service of God, that not only are the ignorant charmed, but the critical spirit is led captive, made to feel, by the power of the music, the sense of the presence and nearness of the infinite—our relation to the spiritual mystery of the divine. No form of mere words can do this as music in its higher efforts can. There is much, indeed, of what passes for good music, which will altogether fail to do this; but the reason is, that, after all, the music is not good. It may be good in regard to time and tune, and yet fail in some other respect. Sometimes the simplest form of music is the best; just as simple language, in monosyllables, will come home to the understanding better than high-wrought periods in long words and sonorous sentences. Simple music, as simple words, is generally the best. It is bad taste which leads us to seek the complex in singing as in speaking. Songs and psalms and hymns which are not simple, are not

fitted for singing, and will not be permanently popular; and tunes which are not simple will have their brief day, and then die out of the affection and memory of men. The old airs which have lasted for centuries are all simple. The sublime is always simple.

THE OLD IS BETTER.

I could wish that we had an ample collection of the old tried tunes which appeal to the heart, and that every one of us could sing them with propriety. The books of music which continually come to us from our neighbours, are full of impertinences and bad taste; novelties which, like the fashions, are soon to become obsolete. It is a great pity that we could not keep clear of them. As not one book in every hundred is worth reading, so not one tune in every hundred is worth singing. It requires an inspired man to write a tune which is worthy to be wedded to our psalms. I would almost as soon be tied up to the old original twelve tunes, as be bound to hear many of the tunes in the collections of modern music repeated the second time.

PSALMS AND HYMNS.

I may here incidentally notice that, while some of the psalms are, from their references to local

events, not appropriate to be sung commonly by us, except with due explanation, and, as it were, translation into spiritual language, it is, in my mind, better to hold by them, and by the paraphrases in our collection, than have anything to do with the collections of hymns which are in common use in many churches. There is in these hymns and so-called psalms so much inanity, and in some instances so much profanity and false doctrine embodied, that I feel almost content to abide by our own psalms. There are, indeed, obscure allusions; there is much bad versification, obsolete words, etc., which mar their beauty; yet, upon the whole, there are no vehicles of praise equal to them. I would not have you to be opposed to a smoother rendering of these psalms, nor to be opposed to the singing of other passages from Scripture, either versified or in the prose form; still, if this cannot be attained, I think we are better to hold by our time-honoured collection, than to run after the hymns which are so common.

We will need to take care, in singing the psalms of praise, not to exercise a critical or censorious spirit, but rather to become imbued with the deep feeling of piety which animated their authors; and if we do so, we shall find our religious nature benefited, and God, through the exercise of our praise,

will bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, and so aid in saving us from the sins which beset our souls.

SNARES FOR PRAYER.

There are also dangers besetting us in prayer. We find among these dangers an irreverent demeanour, wandering eyes, irrelevant thoughts—probably on pleasure or on business—thoughts about the prayer, rather than thoughts engaged in prayer, —critical thoughts, censuring the manner or words or order of the leader, or, probably, approbative of these, a thing not much less foreign to the exercise and destructive of its true spirit. How many are the ways in which we may here sin against God! Nothing but a strong effort of the will will stay the wandering thoughts, will call home fancy from her excursions over many fields, will stop the trenchant sword of critical thought. Keep thy foot here, for there are stumbling-stones and rocks of offence on all hands.

As dogs which have not been trained, when taken to the chase, instead of pursuing steadily the game, fly after everything which starts up before them, careering far away over hill and dale, so our thoughts in prayer, if not truly schooled to the exercise, fly after every upstart fancy far away from

the object which we had in view when we commenced the exercise; and, it may be, scarcely get a glimpse of the great God whom we propose to worship, or of the sin which we should confess, or of the blessing we should seek.

THE DOUBLE TRAIN OF THOUGHT.

It is possible in many operations to pursue a separate train of thought from that which the work we are engaged on requires. This is especially the case in regard to mechanical employments, in which habit seems to supply the place of thought, leaving the mind to wander at will. There are also persons who can carry on two or three processes of thought at the same time, where thinking is the matter of the exercise. Some can write original literary productions, and carry on an intelligent conversation. Some have been able to dictate to two or three amanuenses at the same time. Their thoughts on each of the subjects are so methodized, that they can, without confusion, or letting slip the thread, give the separate series all the attention that is required. It must be confessed, however, that this gift is rare; and indeed, where original thought is required, the whole attention has ever been found necessary even by the highest geniuses. We think that prayer is one of those things which require the whole soul,

mind, and will. It is possible to give a dreamy attention to the words, and even order of thought, of the leader in prayer, while at the same time pursuing a separate chase; but it must be admitted that true engagement of the soul in prayer to God cannot consist with much wandering.

PERFUNCTORY PRAYER.

There is a habitual and an official kind of prayer, which may be followed without much effort of either mind or will. Words connecting texts, so assorted that they follow one another in a certain order, petitions so associated that the one is suggestive of the other, not less than written or printed prayers, may all be very easily managed both by the leader and the congregations without much of the soul or heart; but it is ever to be observed that this is prayer in its lowest form. The higher form is that in which the whole soul goes forth to God in earnest overwhelming desire for the blessing, and in this high form of the exercise the whole soul will evidently be required. The whole heart, mind, and strength require to be concentrated on the one thing. Here Paul says, 'I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the understanding also.'

THE SPIRIT WILLING, THE FLESH WEAK.

In urging this undivided attention upon you, I feel that it is all the more needed, from the faults of manner of which the minister may be guilty. His thoughts may be disturbed, his spirit may be faint, his words may be unorderly, his tones may grate on the ear. A thousand things may present themselves for criticism to the fastidious taste. This only shows how much more danger we are in, than we might under other circumstances be. If a man have a great many temptations to swear, he just requires to have the more guard over his temper. If the solicitations to evil are numerous, he requires all the more to resist its every appearance; and if a congregation have a poor minister, they had need to be doubly watchful, to keep their feet when they go to the house of God.

PREACHING AND HEARING.

In the other exercise peculiar to the house of God—that of listening to instruction—dangers still abound. It may be admitted that here there is to be more freedom of thought, a wider range. ‘Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God;’ ‘I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say,’ and such like injunctions, imply that the criti-

cal faculty is here to be exercised. It may suit very well those who believe in an infallible church to renounce all private judgment, and to give up their minds solely to the reception of the statements made, but such a rule cannot be imposed upon us. On the contrary, the judgment and the reason should here be fully exercised. The doctrines announced should be brought before the bar of every man's conscience in the sight of God. While, however, the critical faculty is thus to be exercised, it should be more exercised in regard to matter than manner—more as to the truth than its form. There should be a serious apprehension of the great importance of truth as truth, and an application of it to the heart and conscience.

BAD SERMONS AND BAD TEMPER.

Some of you may be in danger of falling into bad tempers when the truth is presented in an unsatisfactory way—when there are many words, but nothing said after all—when falsities are, through ignorance, enunciated, or truths presented in exaggerated forms. It is wonderful how much sin a poor sermon may cause you to commit.

GOOD SERMONS AND BAD APPLICATIONS.

But you may miss your foot, even when truth is

faithfully and well spoken, by a variety of ways. You may do this by falling asleep ; or you may miss some point necessary to the elucidation of the whole subject by a minute of inattention during some of those excursions which the mind sometimes takes after follies and fancies ; or you may be disgusted with some truth which reproves your daring sin, or which is opposed to your cherished prejudices ; or, while approving all that is said, you may yet be disgusted with it because it is *old* or threadbare, or perhaps because it is new, and *not* quite in harmony with, as you think, some dogma which is also true ; or, what is worst of all, you may set your minds to a stern resistance of the conviction which the truth brings,—a resistance of the duty to which the truth leads. This is the most terrible of all failings of the worshipping people of God. It is their condemnation. The light they do not receive, the darkness they love ; their evil deeds cannot bear the light, but like owls shrink into the night, and prowl about after their prey, amid the vices and iniquities of life.

There is nothing so terrible, so hardening—so debasing I had almost said—as this resistance to the truth. Those who have long listened to the gospel sound without its producing any converting effect, are in a situation ten times worse than those who live

in regions where it has never been heard. Though ignorance be not bliss, yet knowledge of itself is not happiness. Knowledge is the name of happiness, but, if despised, it will become misery.

DANGER IN AND WITHOUT ORDINANCES.

Let us consider that, though the attendance on ordinances is thus beset with dangers, yet that attendance is not to be neglected because of the dangers. It might be said, if so many dangers surround the path of the worshipper, we would do well not to worship at all. You cannot escape from duty this way. The path of duty is always the path of danger.

There is no species of life in which a man is not exposed to danger. We are surrounded with temptations on all hands when we go out in the way of any duty. Business has its perils, but it must still be done. We are always liable to temptations, but the duty lies not in striving to avoid all places and circumstances where we may meet them, but in giving a steady resistance to them whenever they assail. It is thus that we become strong, morally and spiritually strong. He is not trusted who has not been tried, any more than he who has fallen. It is he who, having been tried, has been found equal to the peril, that has our confidence.

So it is, my brethren, in religion. We are tried in the worship of God, that we may become strong to worship Him aright with fulness of devotion, with our whole nature. We are tried with wandering thoughts, with drowsiness, and with weariness, that we may surmount these evils; not that we should renounce the worship of God, but that we may not worship Him badly.

Those who have followed on, resisting the evils and perils of worship, have been able to overcome all its temptations, and to become strong men in Christ Jesus. May it be ours to worship Him in spirit and truth to whatsoever temptation we may have been subject, and not descend to the mere form of worship which is so common and so destructive to our high spiritual nature!

XV.

THE VOW.

'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, *defer not* to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?'—ECCLES. v. 2-6.

A FORM OF PRAYER.

THE vow is a form of prayer. It is a prayer with an obligation. The worshipper wants something, and, either that he may get it or that he may show his gratitude, he resolves to do a certain thing. There is nothing inherently wrong in the vow, otherwise so many Old Testament worthies would not have come under such obligations, nor would regulations have appeared in divine writ approbatory of such things. At the same time we are warned against all rash vows. It is better not to vow, than vow and not pay,

save when the vow is itself unlawful; in which case, as it was wrong to make it, it must be wrong to fulfil it. From the beginning, a vow is unlawful which contemplates the possible violation of some known law of morals. Jephthah's vow was so. It was monstrous in him to carry it out, as the record would seem to affirm that he did, but without giving any approbation of it. If not unjust, it is good to pay the vow. The word of man should be held as sacred by him, even when passed to a fellow-man: how much more to God! There are few greater evils that a man can be guilty of, than to say what he will not do. It is a discord which jars all the nerves of our moral being. This is true of religious things especially. To say what we mean not to do, is hypocrisy; to refuse to do what we said we would do, is dishonesty. If you vow, pay. It is better not to vow, than vow and not pay.

All God's promises are yea and amen. He never takes back what He uttered. If the promise be absolute, you may expect it to be absolutely performed; if hypothetical, then on the performance of the duty we may be sure to have the blessing. God would have us to be like Him in this as in other things. Indeed, common honesty will suggest that such is the requirement in every case.

In the Old Testament economy the vow was a

common form of worship. We should not judge those who made them too strictly. They were generally made in view of temporal blessings. Jacob sought protection from God, and vowed that, if he had it, God should be his God, and the place of his vision should be the place of his worship. Jephthah's vow was made, that he might procure success to his arms. Saul laid the people under obligations likely to produce disastrous results. David seems to have made many vows—all springing from his deep piety, rather than for the procurement of blessings. 'Thy vows are upon me.' Hannah, the mother of Samuel, vowed him to the Lord. It is worthy of remark that, in the New Testament, the vow is only mentioned twice,—that in the case of Paul, who had made a vow while he was a Jew, and that of some other Jews who had a like obligation. It would seem as though the vow was, like fasting, sacrifice, and other ceremonial things, to become obsolete in the Christian dispensation. There was something in it suited to those lower and feebler views of God which obtained in the infancy of the Church. The chief objection to it is, that it lays a man under a bond to do what should always spring from love, that it is likely to be put as a full satisfaction for the religious obligations of the Christian, which yet include the whole life and being; and

that there is in it an assumption that, if we do not make the vow, the obligation on our part is not incurred; whereas this is not so, for I may say that whatever is lawful for us to vow is always right for us to do, even if we had not made the vow. Take the case of Hannah's vow regarding Samuel: she determined that the child granted to her prayers should be the Lord's. It was right that Samuel should be so dedicated, from the fact that he was, even from his birth, a religious character. There is one view which would make it good in our estimation to vow such a vow, viz., the effect it had on her own mind and that of the child. We doubt not but that such religious views and thoughts continually directed to one object had a strong tendency to fulfil the intention of the pious mother. The tempers of mothers are very influential on their children. The surroundings of childhood are the soil from which the plant of life derives its nourishment, and will go far to make it true, good, and healthful, or its opposite. What we fear is, that there might be an attempt to carry out a vow of dedication where there was incompatibility and unsuitableness. Otherwise such dedication is good. The earnest wishes of excellent mothers, and their prayers, have great and blessed effects on their children. Still we think, in any case of dedication,

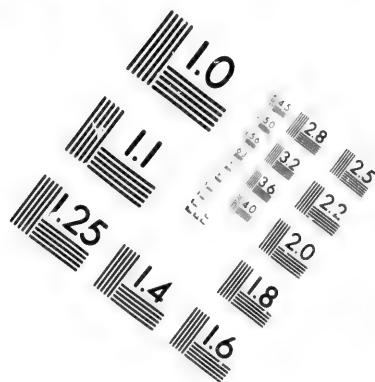
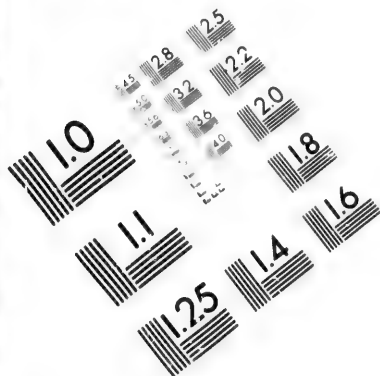
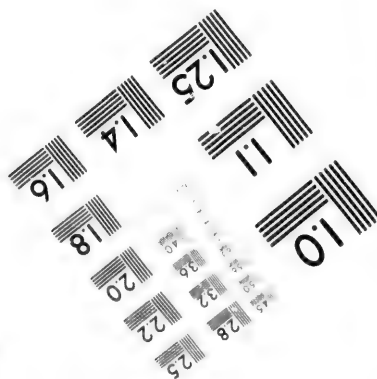
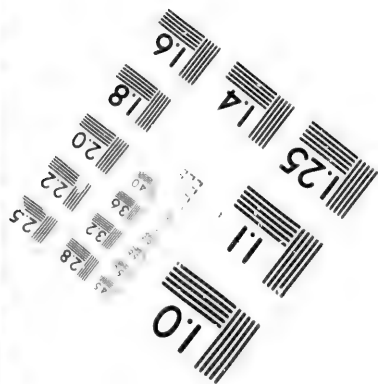
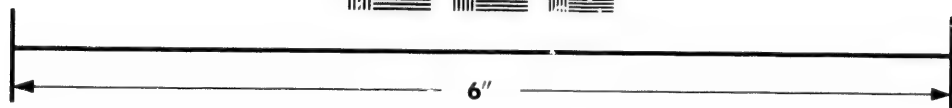
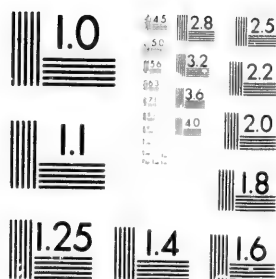


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there should be no absolute vow that should be carried out, if found to be unsuitable. Rashness and inconsiderateness should not lead us to make any vow, either which we cannot keep, which we will not keep, or which it would be unlawful for us to keep, for such, translated into our language, is no doubt the essential meaning of those words: 'Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel,'—that is, the messenger of God, the minister, the priest, who was cognizant of the making of the vow,—'that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?'

VOLUMINOUS PRAYERS.

We are cautioned here not only against rash vows, but against unconsidered and voluminous prayers. Be not rash nor hasty: let thy words be few. Our Saviour cautioned against vain repetitions. Several gross vices in prayer are here indicated. First, voluminous prayer is to be guarded against,—the utterance of the same request in many forms, as though God should be affected with the variety and quantity of speech! This, when done as a duty, is an evil; when done for pretence, is a hypocrisy. There is great difficulty in making judicious remarks here; anything which we might say in restraint of the

vain repetitions of prayer, having perhaps a tendency to damp the ardour of true devotion, and anything said by us against hypocrisy in prayer, being possibly felt, though not intended, as spoken against that true devotion which leads to frequent communion with God. We would, however, say that, when we go to God, we should go with some petition which we want granted. We should know what it is; and if we have many petitions, we should have them arranged in proper order, and we should express them simply. There is much prayer without desire; and if God would grant many petitions which are offered up, many a worshipper would be greatly amazed, and sadly disappointed. These petitions are offered up as matters of course for things proper to be desired, but things which really are not desired. Take for instance our prayers for a new nature, for spiritual-mindedness. Well, we are afraid that there are prayers lying at the back of these petitions giving them the negative. The petitioners do not think there is not a good and a benefit in these things, but they do not want them for themselves, at least not now. A new nature is just what they do not want, but a little more indulgence of the old. They are as full of worldly-mindedness as they can be, and do not wish to have it destroyed. What then? Should we cease to offer up such prayers?

No! But what we should do is this: try to get such views of the nature of things sought to be got rid of as shall lead to earnestness in our petitions against them, and to get such views of the blessings prayed for as shall lead us really to desire them. All preaching is for the purpose of giving such light, as all revelation is. The duty of prayer is implied in the caution against its improper exercise. We require to study, that our prayers be of the right kind,—that they be not mere verbiage; and, as in going before men for any favour, our words should be few, and well ordered.

FORMS AND FREE PRAYER.

In speaking on such a subject as this, we cannot avoid referring to the comparative merits of forms of prayer and free prayer. There are some very extreme views on this point. We once heard a professor of divinity advise his students to note down the various things for which they should in public service pray, and the order in which they should be taken up. Some of the more enthusiastic but weak-minded thought, and in private discussion affirmed, that this was wrong advice,—that the course indicated limited the spirit, and was destructive of true prayer, which should always be spontaneous. We have heard some of those who took

exception pray, and certainly there was no strong recommendation of their opinion in their example,—their exertations being weak, disjointed, spasmodic. There is very much of this everywhere. On the other hand, there is much of what seems mere repetition. This is the case not only with what has been called, but wrongly, extemporary prayer; but in written formulas there is much danger of falling into formality. There is also in forms of prayer, when used alone, no allowance for the introduction of petitions which the soul would offer up spontaneously, but which are not found within the printed or written form. We are encompassed on all hands with difficulties in the discharge of our duties; and the highest duties of our life are probably those which are encompassed with the highest difficulties. But that is no reason why we should shirk these duties. This world is a place of discipline, and difficulty is in every lesson which we are taught; but the surmounting of the difficulty makes us better than before. About the exercise of prayer there are great difficulties, which can only be surmounted by previous study, by constant watchfulness, and by a simple reliance on the Spirit of God, as the source from whom all our inspirations flow.

PUBLIC PRAYER.

The passage before us seems to contemplate especially public prayer. The house of God here, no doubt, signified the temple. But it is the prayer of the private worshipper in the public assembly that seems specially in the view of the Preacher. We do not know that there was any public prayer proper observed in the temple or synagogue; that is, prayer by the leader of the services. The Psalms, and portions of the Law and Prophets, were read; but we have not any grounds for supposing that any particular office-bearer read other prayers than those contained in the Scriptures, or offered extempore devotions in leading the people. Christ read and expounded in the synagogues; but we do not find that in connection with these He prayed as part of the service. But it would appear that it was quite usual for individuals to pray their own prayers. The Pharisee and publican made the temple the place of their offerings of prayer. The Pharisees were in the habit of praying at the corners of the streets, that they might pass for very pious persons. Christ, while disapproving of their motives, yet approved of the act of devotion. In order to avoid ostentation, He advised His disciples to pray in secret. 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy

closet.' That they might avoid the verbosity and inconsideration often manifested in prayer, He gave His disciples a form, which is very short and very comprehensive, and which might serve as a guide to them. He might have specially in His view this direction of the Preacher: 'Let thy words be few, and well ordered.' How few and beautiful and all-comprehensive are these words! Addressed to the Father in heaven, they seek the honour of His glorious name, the stability and enlargement of His kingdom, the fulfilment of His will, the daily bread on which both poor and rich are dependent, the forgiveness of sins for the forgiving soul, freedom from temptation into which the weak one, feeling his weakness, might fall, and deliverance from the evil which is on every side—the whole being for His glory, power, and kingdom. Sometimes we think, on reading this beautiful form of devotion, that if we could just get into the spirit of it, and apprehend its grand and glorious ideas, we should need no other liturgy. The great difficulty is to get thoroughly into its spirit. A story is told of a certain actor, who, in company with a number of ministers, was asked the reason why he, an actor, could move audiences with fictions, while they, with the grandest realities, could do so little. He replied that he and his co-actors spoke their fictions as

realities, but they, the ministers, uttered their glorious truths as though they were fables. As an illustration of what he meant, he repeated the Lord's Prayer, and in such voice and manner and earnestness, that the whole company were melted into tears, declaring that they had never seen the beauty and sublimity of that prayer till then. The reason why the actor is successful, is because he studies his subject, brings out all the ideas embodied in the words he utters; but we speak them perfunctorily. There is no better study than that of this prayer. If we can only get filled with its spirit, if we can get a comprehension of its ideas, we shall indeed do well. We do not indeed propose that we should keep always to these words: this is not the intention of Christ. It is only as a model of that order and comprehensiveness which should be infused into all our addresses to a throne of grace. Nor should we too strictly copy even these great qualities. The spirituality of the religion which Christ left us, requires the utmost spontaneity in our devotions. He left us His own prayers—especially that in John for His disciples—as examples of that variety and earnestness which He would have us to cultivate. He also imbued His Church with a spirit of dependence on the heavenly Father, and of faith in His name as a power with God. 'Ask, and ye shall

receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' etc. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. It is only the narrow mind which sees any discrepancy between directions to importunate prayer and cautions against vain repetitions. Not repetitions, but *vain* repetitions. What analogy is there between the mere reciter of phrases and the intense seeker, whose whole soul is earnest with the thought of some needed blessing? Avoid vain petitions; yet you may with Christ, desiring to have this cup of sorrow pass without drinking, pray often, using, like Him, the same words. It is the spirit in which the petition is uttered which makes all the difference. The repetitionary form is a dead corpse galvanized into spasmodic utterances; the earnest desire is a spiritual being, instinct with life, and beautiful to the eye of the living God, who, through it, holds communion with the man after His own heart, and with whom He dwells by the inhabitation of His own Spirit.

THE HOUSE OF GOD.

The house of God is spoken of as the scene of prayer. But now the house of God is where two or three are gathered in His name. The chamber, indeed, containing only one man of God with the door shut about him, is God's own house. 'Your

body,' speaking of the Christian, 'is the temple of the living God.' The same rules apply there as in the family, or the more numerous gatherings of the people of God in their public places of devotion. Our duty, rather our privilege, calls us there. We would say more, even place is nothing. All places and times where a true, believing soul is, is the house of God. Rather the believer being that house, place and time are as nothing in worship. He should have his seasons and places of special devotion, and yet the direction, 'Pray without ceasing,' consecrates all place and time to him. Nor is this direction, rightly understood, impossible of fulfilment. If a Christian is engaged in business or in pleasure, he feels at the same time not the less with his God. As Jesus said of the Son of man, that He was in heaven, so may each son of God, made such by Him, affirm in a sense the same fact. He is in heaven;—he dwells with God, and God dwells with him. Nay, he is in God, and God is in him. This is no mystery, but fact. You may meet with those who deal with you, who speak the words of friendship to you, and who, almost running parallel with their outward transactions, are carrying on commerce with God, and conversing with Him,—and all this without any of those faces or forms or shibboleths which characterize the Pharisee. And it ought to

be the aim of each individual believer to have this permanent communion with his Father who is in heaven. Then will he indeed find the promise verified, 'We will come unto him, and dwell with him.'

THE PRAYER AND THE DREAM.

There is an analogy instituted between voluminous prayer and the voluminous dream. The dream arises out of the various transactions of business, and the fool's prayer springs from the variety of his vocabulary. Confusion is the characteristic of both. They are produced by external influences. The soul as a directing rational power is asleep. Dim memories of things mingle in a wild phantasmagoria before the closed portals of the sense of the dreamer. It is just so with the worshipping word-monger. The nature and character of God, the promises, Scripture language, are floating before the closed vision of the pietistic dreamer, and his prayers are a jumble of disjointed things. This will always be the case with him who gives himself up to the external influences. Hence Paul says in reference to those who spoke and prayed in unknown tongues: 'What is it then? I will pray with the heart, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will

sing with the understanding also.' He would not have men carried away by enthusiasm. He would direct enthusiasm. The spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets. All things are to be done decently, and in order. The plea of enthusiasm is no apology for disorder. The coursers of enthusiasm are to be guided by the hand of reason.

But as it is better to dream than to be dead, so is it always better to pray, even disjointedly and wildly, than to be without that breath of the spiritual life. The mere enthusiast, guided by no reason in his devotions, may be brought under its direction; but how shall mere reason become enthusiastic? We answer, by the action of the Spirit of God on the soul. What we need is this Spirit. We can prophesy to the dry bones, and clothe them with flesh; but the Spirit of God is needed that they may stand up and become an army of God. 'Come, O breath, and breathe on those slain, that they may live,' is to be our prayer. When we have got the answer to that petition, we shall be living, loving, active Christians. May God hasten its accomplishment! May God convince the hypocrite of his hypocrisy, the vain word-petitioner of his vanity, the rationalist of the inefficiency of his cold deductions, the irreligious of the necessity of religion, the

sinner of his sin, the soul of each man of his absolute need of God ; and may each one pray against the sin, whatever it is, that easily besets, not in words, but in earnest, fervent pleadings that God may come down to us and pour out His convincing, converting, directing, counselling, consoling Spirit—making us feel religion as a reality, and leading us to the only vow which Christians recognise, at least the vow which alone can make any other vow worthy in the sight of God—the vow of self-dedication, the surrender of the whole being as a ‘living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service !’

XVI.

RICHES.

‘If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they. Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.’—ECCLES. v. 8–13.

THEIR ORIGIN.

RICHES are either the spontaneous gift of nature, or the product of labour, or of both combined. They spring from the field, which yet labour requires to make prolific. There is no glebe which will render its fruits without the invocation of toil. The garden must be dressed, the field must be ploughed, the tree must be planted, the seed must be sown, the harvest must be reaped, the grain must be threshed and ground, that man may eat. In a bar-

barous state men may live by hunting, and gathering what the earth spontaneously produces, but precariously and in danger. Nor is labour wanting even to the chase. It is, however, when civilisation begins that labour expands and becomes complex. Each new requirement brings some new toil. Work is the antithesis of want. It is the desire of the heart that sets the hand in motion. The field is a casket of treasure, which the hand of industry must unlock. The world of humanity awaits its opening that it may eat and be clothed. All classes, all ranks, the peasant and the king, are served from the field.

Very various are the products of nature and work. Each zone has its specialties of fruit. Here are mines of coal, there of lead or iron,—all that man fabricates for comfort or ornament. Each nation has its industries. These require to be transported to other climes. Trade becomes a necessity. The merchant must organize the means of distribution through the various countries where the products of art and labour are wanted. Protection of these, too, is needed. There are thus not only farmers and shepherds, but artisans of all sorts, and traders and merchants, priests, lawyers, politicians, and rulers,—all, however, whatever may be their business, ultimately dependent on the soil for sustenance. ‘The

profit of the field is for all: the king himself is served of the field.'

When we first begin to think of the matter, we are amazed that all this wealth which we behold should have its origin in the fields. Wealth is held by political scientists to have its origin in labour. We hold that its origin is in the field. Labour is rather the channel through which it flows to the great confluence of riches. The produce of the field, converted into the machinery and powers of human nature, lies at the basis of all. These powers and machinery are, indeed, a gain used to evoke other products of the soil. From the farm and the garden and the mine—we need not forget altogether the submerged fields of the seas—through the labours of thousands of hands, comes all that wealth which, in the great city, amazes us, filling the homes of princes and the palaces of kings. The whole of this untold treasure has come from the field, tilled by the sweat of the husbandman, from the mineral dragged from the bowels of the earth, or from the fruit of peril by the 'toilers of the sea.'

One thing may be noted, viz., that while all have their profit from the field, those most directly engaged in the contest with nature, compelling her to render up her treasures, have generally the least reward. The profit has always a tendency to flow away to

where commerce spreads her sails. There capital concentrates itself, and grows to huge proportions, while labour remains poor and shrunken. What fortunes and cities are to grow to, who can tell? To what depths of misery congregated populations are to sink, who can say? One seeks for some means of equalizing the profits of industry in vain. We would like to see riches more generally distributed. Is it not harrowing to think that, while wealth is a burden to one, poverty sucks out the life-blood of another; that untold luxury in the street stands hard by the hovel, where dry crusts would be welcome fare; that surfeiting and famine live near neighbours, and hardly know it? Think, O ye children of wealth, of your lowly brethren, the sons and daughters of toil, and, while ye reap the fruit of their labours, think of some way by which these may be lightened. 'Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others.'

WEALTH AND POVERTY.

We suppose there is a hard necessity that there should be in our world this contrast of wealth and poverty. It is the order of Providence, established not without good reason in the commercial as well as the moral and spiritual world, that to him that

hath shall be given. The equal distribution of wealth would defeat its use; for who would work who had abundance? Yet abundance itself would become want without work, and riches themselves would be no more valuable. Poverty is God's task-master, and, to get free from his lash, man must win his liberty by labour. But there are evils of poverty which may be lightened, and ought to be cured. The rights of the poor are frequently violated. Wealth makes laws in its own favour, and administers them to its own advantage. 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perversion of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter.' This ought not to be; and it is the duty of those who are set high in authority to take note of it, as God, who is higher than the highest, does. We need not wonder that wealth should be selfish, or that power should be unjust; but we may be satisfied that God, who is guide and director of all, will bring good out of evil and equality out of injustice, which shall have its due reward in that universe where a time is appointed for everything,—even for the execution of just judgment, and the conviction and punishment of each crying injustice.

PROFIT OF LABOUR.

There is, however, a fair profit on labour which

may be husbanded and amassed. This may become very great ; yet, great as it is, it may fall far below the aspirations of its possessor. The desire for riches is generally far in advance of their acquisition. We question if the richest men are in any degree more satisfied with their wealth than any moderately well-to-do man with his slender means. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much ; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. Still we do not suppose that the rich are the most avaricious. Greed is sometimes closely allied to poverty. We may say, without respect to amounts of fortune, the avaricious man is incapable of satisfaction. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity.'

The observation, that when goods increase, they are increased that eat them, is quite true. The more a man has, the more he has generally to provide for. Hangers-on and parasites will be found in abundance on the rich man's fortune. Capital also seeks investment and the aids of labour, whereby it may further increase. Thousands live by the well-spent accumulations of one. There are evils connected with all manufactures, but still by them thousands are fed. The great good in the accumulation of

wealth lies in this, that by proper outlay the members of the human family may be increased, and God's command fulfilled. 'When goods increase, they are increased that eat them.'

GOOD TO THE OWNERS.

There seems to be only a very partial statement of the benefits of riches in the question, 'What good is to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?' This is the only satisfaction, indeed, of the miser; but men are not all misers. There is a satisfaction in being the means of communicating sustenance and enjoyment to others. It is happiness to make others happy, to see others happy. The good enjoy only while blessing others. Like lakes and seas, rich good men spread their abundant riches that they may be absorbed by the strong sun of benevolence, carried away over the hills and valleys to descend in refreshing showers—all returning to the source whence they sprung—with abundant happiness.

RICHES NOT EASILY KEPT.

One sore evil Solomon saw,—riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. It is hinted, too, that they cannot be long so kept,—that some evil travail, some unprosperous work, will blot out the results of

all their toil, and poverty will sweep out riches and take possession of the house ; so the rich man shall become as poor as the new-born child. Of course it is not always the case that riches, which should have been spent, make to themselves wings and flee away ; yet it is an observation which has been made by more than Solomon, that it is very hard to keep what duty would require us to have spent or given.

SHALL WE DO WHAT WE WILL WITH OUR OWN ?

There are various ways of viewing this question about the due employment of riches. The general view is, that each man may do what he will with his own, and that there is no one to call him to account. This is in some aspects true, in others not. In the first place, the question would need settlement : What is man's own ? The tax collector, in various forms, diminishes the sum-total considerably. But after all legal demands have been satisfied, is it just so clear that a man may do what he likes with what is left ? No man has any right with it to support what is vile or vicious, or in any way detrimental to the morals or health of the community. The law may permit him to do it, but he does it at the peril of his soul. No man who does anything of this kind—employs his money or capital

for the support of anything that is sapping the health or morals of the community, having sufficient means of knowing that he is engaged in an evil work—can be a Christian. He may be in the church an officer, in society respected ; but he will have to be converted with such a conversion as will make him leave his sensual life before he can hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. No man has any right with his riches to throw temptations to evil in his brother's way. This statement seems pointless, and yet it may be so sharp as to wound a great many. May the Spirit of God make it do its work ! It will have done its work when it makes each one think—Am I engaged in doing that which is good for my fellow-men with that wealth with which God has blessed me ?

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RICHES.

But besides, are there not responsibilities attendant on the possession of wealth which cannot be got rid of, which ought to be held sacred,—responsibilities in regard especially to education and religion, which if not fulfilled, there will follow terrible evils to the possessors as well as to society at large ? These two things are combined, yet we may speak of them as put separately, and then in connection.

RICHES RESPONSIBLE TO EDUCATION.

I need hardly pause to show that the education of youth is of vast importance as a preventive of crime, or that the ignorant classes are the most criminal. If education will not cure moral disease, it will at least greatly palliate it. It will do much to reduce murder and theft and robbery from the huge dimensions they will without it attain. The great expense of government is owing to the means necessary for the repression of crime. Wealth has to support the depredations of crime, and then has to contribute to its suppression. If we could do without jails and police and criminal courts, we should have heavier pockets. We might reduce these expenses to a minimum, if we could only get the people educated and moralized up to the right point; and the nearer we approach to that point, we will have these expenses of protection to life and property lightened. Wealth kept which should have been expended in education, will have to pay with compound interest in the repression of crime. This will be 'wealth kept by the owners thereof to their hurt.'

NEARING THE RAPIDS.

In the present day, when the franchise is ex-

tended, when each man has a right to aspire to the highest office in the state in virtue of the smallest income or property, and when all things tend to manhood—not to say womanhood—suffrage, there is need of education to the masses, or terrible evils are imminent. Without education, society is politically approaching the rapids, in which it will find it hard to live without woful disaster. In our great cities are found the most notable examples of what society is coming to under the reign of ignorance and corruption. The most ignorant and vile in the community plunder it at pleasure. Civic officers are often in league with thieves and murderers. Wealth often is so gigantic, that it is still able to afford these depredations. But wealth is beginning to awake to its perils and duties. Whatever education can do, must be done. It has to contend with a gigantic system of religion in many places, which is the ally of ignorance, and so its efforts may be partially neutralized; yet it is to be hoped that the greatest and wealthiest cities of modern times will deal successfully even with that. But nearer home have we nothing to fear? While our neighbours all around are making the greatest efforts that the best systems of education shall be used in their lower and higher schools and colleges, we are lagging behind. Other lands are far in advance of us.

They have neither better men as teachers, nor more intelligent children as scholars, but their systems are better, and their hearts are larger. There are yet towns we know of, whose schoolhouses are their disgrace—whose loose, undefined system of teaching will long be their hurt. Children are growing up only half educated in consequence. They will lag behind in the race of commerce and art and science. Legislators and people are alike in fault, where education is neglected. Legislators may be afraid to impose a tax on the people for the education of their children, lest they should lose their next election. They dare not do the ignorant masses this great benefit. They wait till a general election shall have secured them a new tenure of power, ere they dare to move in this matter. But in the absence of law, why is benevolence asleep? Why is wealth dreaming of continued prosperity, while ignorance everywhere sends up its dank weeds? Would it be too much to ask of wealth that it should tax itself to build and endow decent academies and colleges? And yet, if a public meeting were called for such a purpose in many places, how many would attend? We have not got a liberal education. We have been educated in the school of selfishness. We have not learned ‘to do good and communicate.’ We belong to the past; we are fast becoming fossils. We are

perpetuations of the old hedge-schools of thought. We have had our slender education, and made money out of it, and we think our children should succeed as we have done. Ah! the times are altered, and we are not changed. Do you think that our ignorance shall be able to compete with the learning of our neighbours? It cannot be done. They will beat us, and trample over us. We will be half, and they whole men—miserable specimens of what man was intended to be—workers at the mill of life, or perhaps money grubs, without knowing the use of money, if not rather machines, out of which educated men know how to grind wealth and taste and enjoyment for themselves. Our riches kept from the cause of education will be kept to our own hurt, and to the hurt of society, to the hurt of the rising generation.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION.

But education which deals with the intellect alone will not be sufficient. We must address our instruction to the moral and spiritual in man. If we could only make the youthful generation conscientious, truthful, upright, and pious—doing justly to God and man—then would wealth be safe, and society secure. The thief would be a myth, and the jailor useless. Is this Utopia? Well, we will admit

that it may be long yet till realization, but it belongs to the future. 'Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.' 'There shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.' But we shall rise to this condition by successive sore and toilsome steps. We are yet at the base of God's mountain of justice and righteousness. Wealth and benevolence must help our humanity to climb its steep ascent. Society may get a little way up the hill, even in our day and by our aid. Certainly there will be no profit in our staying down where we are. Crimes now waste our wealth. Might not wealth kill out some of these wasters? It is worth some thought. When foreign missions are spoken of, we hear from those chiefly who do not want to give, that we need missions at home. True. Well, then, why not have them? Why not have reformatories and schools of industry? Why wait for some old man to die before anything can be done? Why not support young men's associations, and for that matter young women's associations, whose business it should be, in their spare hours, to aid those needing help to fight the battle which so many are trying to wage against temptations to evil? I do not speak of benevolence as a reason for this action on the part of wealth. I address wealth through the ear of the pocket. You think, O wealth,

that when you have, by some miserable subterfuge—some lying plea that you cannot give, or that you have become depleted with giving—some whining story about the amount of benefactions,—when by such means you have got rid of some charitable beggar, asking money not for his use, but for God's use, for the neutralization of crime, for the safety of society, the protection of morals,—you think, O wealth, you have done a fitting and proper thing! No, you have refused to pay for your own protection. You are like Nabal, whose flocks and goods had been protected from the robbers by David, dismissing his application with contemptuous words. 'Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?' while the young men's account was: 'The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us, both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.' But this is the reply which the Nabals of wealth give to the Davids of education and religion, who protect the riches acquired from the wolves

of crime. In a dim way this is seen, and falteringly acknowledged as a general fact,—true in regard to our neighbours, but not as to our personal selves. Oh no, we never are stingy; we are so charitable, that we fear the poorhouse is going to be our fate! Well, there are such persons, strange as it may seem, who as a matter of fact are too charitable,—no, but who by their charities shame our meanness, if shame were in us,—poor men giving dollars where rich men give mites. When we look at our towns; when we think of their riches—of our rich men; when we see the meanness of our means of education, and the magnificence of our private establishments; of how much we spend on bodily comfort, and so little on soul furniture; on our luxuries of the palate, and the miserable mouldy crusts on which we starve mind,—and think of the little, shrivelled, atrophied tenants of the brain, in those grand, finely dressed persons,—we almost lose patience with Providence, and are ready to speak very unadvised words. We dare not speak thus, save in a general way, as no man, however mean or stingy or unjust in his charities, will ever take the words to himself. Oh no, we are perfectly safe. There is hardly a rich man in the city who does not believe—and some of them justly so—that he has discharged his obligations to education and religion! But while some have done so,

the greater part have an enormous, ever increasing deficit in their account, which they ought to set themselves as soon as possible to discharge. They are keeping back their riches to their own hurt.

A MEAN ARGUMENT WITH A MEAN THING.

But this is a very low ground to take. Very true, but the pocket is a very mean thing; that is to say, when you are dealing with it, you are dealing with a set of very mean sentiments. And yet there is in all, in the veriest miser, a higher nature, a heart, a soft, tender sentiment, if we only knew how to approach and wake it up to beautiful action. You do not see the appeal to you from the side of justice and selfish consideration, but you may from some higher motive. You do not merit the protection of your riches. They may be swept away. Well, let them go. You suggest, too, that they may be swept away from your coffers by the educated and by the religious—so called, so esteemed; and why, then, should you aid religion and education? Without pausing to show that this fact of the dishonesty of the professor of piety and the well-educated is rather exceptional, and that the great fear is of the irreligious and ignorant, I would present another form in which riches may be kept to the hurt of the owners. They hurt their owner's kind,

gentle nature, when they make it grow hard and avaricious. They hurt the luminous souls of their possessors, when they blind them to the beautiful effects which might be produced by the expenditure of riches in the works of education, religion, charity. Only keep them—keep all of them—button your pockets tight—add field to field, add house to house, add thousand to thousand—save, scrape, accumulate; and if you don't end with having the most miserable, starved, blind atom of a soul that ever had the misfortune to go sneaking about the world, then we have no knowledge of what an avaricious course is capable of effecting. Better for a man a thousand times to have a dozen of soft hands, of wife and children insinuating themselves into his pocket and leaving only emptiness behind, than to have a grand abundance which only goes on to accumulate. If a man has not these to take from him all he can earn, he should accustom himself to give for the good of others, for charities in all soft and winning forms, that he may preserve his nature from selfishness and miserliness, and his poor soul from becoming a beggar in the world to which we are all fast going.

WHAT WE KEEP, ESCAPES; WHAT WE GIVE, WE KEEP.

Oh, there is a profound, a solemn truth in that

statement, that a man really possesses only what he has given away ! All the rest of his riches he must of sad necessity leave,—he can take alone what he has given. His works do follow him. His acts of kindness have become angels. They sing him sweet songs. They fan his spirit with odorous wings. They drive away all the sad, despairing thoughts which hover around the dark, selfish soul, as, clogged with carnality, it sinks into the abysses. Make, then, to yourselves these beautiful friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when you fail, they may wait on and conduct you into everlasting habitations.

WE MAY KEEP WORK, THE INSTRUMENT OF WEALTH,
FROM GOD.

Perhaps it may be thought that this subject has application solely for those who have amassed wealth in the shape of money or lands. It is of wider sweep. We all are wealthy. We have hands of strength which are wealth ; we have brains which are wealth, affections which are wealth. The hand that gives the cup of cold water, the feet that carry us to visit the sick and the prisoner, the pen and voice that advocate the cause of the poor and needy, are all expending wealth in the cause of the sick, afflicted, and ignorant. Do you think a Sabbath-

school teacher who attends his class in the Sabbath school regularly, gives nothing because he gives only his toil and brain and heart to his work? Ay, he gives vastly more than the richest man in the Church does, in the shape of money, to all the benevolent objects to which he is called on to contribute. What would one of our men of fortune take to sit and toil with his brain and tongue, after he had studied the subject during the week, at any board two hours a day, for fifty-two days in the year? Would he not think himself poorly remunerated if he had only a guinea for every day in which he was so employed; and would he take that if he were not attending to his own interests at the same time? Supposing a young woman would take a couple of hours each week to visit the poor and distressed in her neighbourhood, would she not give more than any man of wealth in the city gives for the cause of the distressed and fallen? You know she would. Do not, then, you who give liberally of your money, think you are the only ones who abound in charity; do not think you are at the top of the list. No. Our young friends who engage in the work of instructing the ignorant and relieving the distressed, are giving far more in their poverty than you of your abundance. You will need to be far more liberal than you have ever

been, before you can hope to approach their figure. Do not be disheartened either, you of the Sabbath labours, or you of the week-day visitation, because you have no money to give. You are already doing far more than your share, though you should never have a shilling to spare. You are giving your dollars and guineas in the form of good substantial work; and we well know that, if God blesses you with substance, you are the very ones who by your liberality will put to shame the so-called liberality of wealth, which gives only its dimes where you, if you had the means, would give your pounds.

SPHERES OF USEFULNESS.

But there are many who are not able to give money who do not give labour. Well, you ought all to think of the duty which is now plainly set forth. If all the strong, active young men and women of the Church would only engage in the works and labours of love for Christ, for His cause, and give an hour or two weekly thereto, what might not be done? There are the outcast, who might be brought in; there are the sick, who might be visited and comforted; there are the ignorant children going about our streets, who might be brought in; the Sabbath school might be overflowing; the church might be filled; the work of God

might be flourishing; the gates of hell might tremble. You have a vast store of riches with which you have been endowed by God, in your strength, your education, your kind, charitable feeling. Do not keep them to yourselves; you will do it to your own hurt. These talents, so far, you may have hid in a napkin in the earth. Bring them out. Let them be used. We propose to show you how. We propose to give you a sphere of usefulness. We propose to make you rich contributors to God's cause. Come to the Sabbath school: we will teach you if you need teaching; we will give you classes if you have ability to instruct; we will send you out on missions, to visit the sick, to bring in the poor to the church and the Sunday school. Especially we say to young women, we have work which will be of far more service to yourselves and society than merely making formal visits and leaving cards. The homes of the poor will be gladdened with your presence; the hearts of the sick will be uplifted and cheered by your smiles; and the children growing up in vice and iniquity and ignorance may be brought to Christ, and made to know His gospel of love and peace. We propose that from the school, as a centre, you shall radiate forth all around, carrying blessings and peace and joy in both hands. Come

to the Sabbath school, and you shall see how to get rid of some of your superabundant wealth of love and labour, now resting in your hands and hearts to your own hurt.

THE WORK OF THE SABBATH.

Our opinion is, that the Sabbath is not used as it ought to be by most people. Jesus has taught us that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, to heal the paralysed, to open the eyes of the blind, to pull the lost of humanity out of pits. There is too much preaching. Piety has degenerated into preaching and prayer and praise. It will never recover its true tone till it is embodied in work. We do not mean that the whole of our time should be devoted to work, but we do mean that every member of the Church, every follower of Jesus, should devote a portion of that day to something more than mere pious indolence. All should see what can be contributed by him to the work of Christ and of humanity. All work of the Sabbath, too, has been confined to the Sabbath school. Is there not room for its enlargement? Might not much be done by a well-organized plan of visitation? Let every one see that he, from this day forth, begin to give of his labour and time to the work of doing good. Come all you young men and

women who have had your minds enlightened as to your duty—your hearts touched with a feeling that you should begin to follow Christ in doing good. Go to the Sabbath school next Lord's day. This discourse means work. Any other conclusion is lame and impotent.

XVII.

THE BANKRUPT.

'But those riches perish by evil travail ; and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.'—ECCLES. v. 14-17.

THE wise man contemplates the position of a person who has had a large fortune which has been swept away, leaving him with a family to which he has nothing to leave. 'There is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.'

VICE A MISAPPLICATION OF FACULTY.

We have always considered the vices of man as

the extravagances and misapplication of faculties implanted in him for wise purposes. Even avarice and miserliness are but exaggerations of the very proper desire and outlook which all should have to a support for old age, and for the subsistence of those whom God hath given to our care, should it please Him to call us away while they are of tender years, and incapable of supporting themselves. Combining with this desire, there may be the love of power and influence and display, the keen spirit of rivalry that wants to win the race and bear the palm, to overhear it said, 'One of our leading merchants, the richest man in the town'—a fame approaching that of the warrior, and, in the estimation of many, exceeding that of the philosopher or the poet. Who would not, then, be rich? The road to wealth is neither so rough nor so steep as that which leads to the knowledge of the secrets of nature. Mammon is by no means so difficult to propitiate as Minerva. And so many become rich, spurred on by these combined impulses; all useful in their place, and necessary to the carrying on of the economy of the world.

FAILURE.

But many who aim at the prizes of wealth do not succeed. Carrying away, as they think, the grand

pile, they are jostled in the way, and a hundred greedy hands snatch the golden opportunity; and they see hurrying away in the distance, those who have rid them of their accumulations. Possibly, on opening their sacks of money, they find that it has somehow mysteriously disappeared. The security has become insolvency, the promise to pay a very truthless word. There has been a great commercial panic, and stocks have become worthless, and banks insolvent. Men's hearts fail for fear. The best names are spoken of doubtingly. The financial world has gone to ruin, and will hardly ever recover from the disaster. The rich man is poor; the poor has become rich. It is the see-saw of fortune, but disastrous and full of grief, notwithstanding.

BANKRUPTCY WORSE THAN POVERTY.

If one could get a view of the wild heart and brain of the man who has fallen from the mountain of wealth, round whose sides so many precariously cling, down into the vast ravines where poverty ever hopelessly wanders, what a scene of sorrow should he behold! It is not so bad—indeed one does not feel it, almost—to have been always poor. It is his lot: he was born to it. His humble thought is only to live by toil. There are many who look to charity

or the poorhouse as their future lot when past labour, and yet are in a dull way happy. But who can be content that, having had plenty, has yet come to poverty; that has come from a groaning table to crusts, from silk and purple to rags; and that, instead of seeking the society of the wealthy, is anxious to retire from its very recognition into some of the lowest strata of poor and indigent humanity?

If you plant an apple tree that has been reared in a southern soil in a cold northern clime, it will hardly live. Bring the vine of Italy to the vineries of New Brunswick, and there will be no grapes. And if you were to tear up the roots of a tall, wide-spreading tree from a fertile meadow, hoping to make it grow on a sterile mountain, we all know how it would end. Is it not just so with those who have tasted the sweets of riches, and have been the possessors of whatever was rare and valuable? We just expect them to mourn, droop, and die, when they are torn from the soil of wealth, and are planted in a field of poverty.

When a man, all his life accustomed to toil for a living, arises in the morning with nothing in his hand, he can go forth, and in some way of hard work generally can get enough to satisfy his wants. There are times, indeed, when industry is paralysed, and when hunger gnaws at the heart of labour. But

what shall he do, then, who has long been accustomed to plenty, when need is present, and those powers are wanting by which we wrest bread from nature? It is with wealth as with any other faculty by which man has made his livelihood. Take it away, and, from long disuse of every other power, it will be found that he is only a waif of circumstances—no more a cunning, skilled agent of the great field of labour. Here is a man who has made his living by his pen: well, let his fancy become clouded, and not only does he no longer know how to wield it, but he has from long disuse become incapable of using any other power. It is just so with a man who was accustomed to use riches. He has lost them; and he is unacquainted with the uses of any other thing—perfectly helpless in life. At least this is so with many. Some there are whom it is impossible to repress. They have lost a fortune to-day, but to-morrow they are found sowing the seed of another; and should that be blighted in the springing, they will be found still sowing, though late, even when the summer of life is ended, and the drear winter of old age has whitened them with its snows.

A COMFORTER.

It is bad enough when a man comes down alone

thus, and finds himself hurt. It is hard to be without any comforter at such a time; it is still harder to have a dependent family. Caresses, in such circumstances, are likely to hurt rather than heal. It is very hard to be unable to repay kindness shown, when we have so much need of it, and feel its worth; and, on the other hand, complainings may be heard which are as hard to bear. About the hardest trial Job had to endure was the harsh voice of his wife scornfully asking him, 'Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die.' We fancy, too, Satan may have overshot the mark when he deprived Job of both property and children. If he had taken away the children and left the property, we can imagine a deeper melancholy sinking down round the old man's heart. If he had taken away the property and left the children, it is hard to see what he would have done with so many, dandled in the lap of luxury, brought down to the depths of poverty. We know not, indeed, but that the bankruptcy of their father would have wakened them to a life of industry, and developed the virtue of self-reliance. In this case, the misfortune would have been a blessing. We fear, however, the misfortune would have been too late for such a transformation. They seem to have been grown up, and their chief occupation was that of a round of continuous feast-

ing, while the old man, at home—too old-fashioned probably for their society—was exercised with fear lest they should have cursed God in their hearts. Misfortune may come too late for our benefit. A few years earlier, and all would have been well. The tree of life has become rooted in the soil of pleasure, and you cannot make it take root in the hard sides of industry. Thus there are many families in every circle who are known by neighbours and friends to have been spoiled. They had fine strong frames, large brains, good kindly affectionate hearts, but they had no need of exertion—every comfort, every luxury was theirs. Pleasure spread for them flowery ways, and set open before them all her doors, and so the useful was abandoned for the pleasant, and a life of dissipation took the place of a life of work and worth. Well, God foreseeing what is about to happen to His favourites, who are fast becoming useless through the too indulgent hand of fortune, sends some financial earthquake to overturn the house, some lightning disaster to smite the fortune, and what we call ruin spreads around, and the whole of the vast accumulations are gone, and now, if not too late, the sons or the daughters may, instead of becoming dangling, insipid, useless drones in life, turn their hand to some valuable work. Have they been ruined? No, they have been saved.

Have they lost their fortune? Yes, but they have found a better. There is want before them, but there is work which will satisfy all its demands. Lost riches are sometimes found opportunities. The accumulated wealth of a father's industry is lost, but the personal source of it is still open, and the active intelligent mind is now awake to its acquisition, and the strong frame bent to secure it. The youths and maidens have narrowly escaped shipwreck by the very storm which, in engulfing their treasure, has driven them away from the rocks and shoals of ruin. It is not, after all, in many cases a great evil, or evil at all, when riches perish by evil travail, even when there is a young, helpless, dependent family to support.

FACE TO FACE WITH FAILURE.

We are not blind to the scenes of grief, consequent on such commercial disasters as lay low the fortunes and hopes of so many. We know how those who have stood high in the world of trade must feel when they see the impending ruin, or how they recoil from the blow. Many have sought refuge in death, that they might escape from the terror and the torture. We have seen strong ones paralysed in mind and body by the grim form of failure. As the time approached which was to make the

awful revelation, the pain became agony. When, too, the truth in all its breadth became known to wife and child—long petted and dandled in the lap of luxury—sometimes it was met with cries of despair, but sometimes, and we believe oftener, by words of cheer and comfort and heroic resolution. Woman more readily accommodates herself to change than man. She rises to affluence more gracefully, she sinks to penury less complainingly. Take her from the cottage or the shop to the castle, and she will very generally comport herself as though born mistress of the manor. Let her sink from affluence to poverty, and she will make flowers bloom around the lowliest home; and so the disaster is not so great as might have been expected. Nay, the very occurrence of what was esteemed a calamity has become a revelation of hidden virtues. The husband may have thought his wife selfish and unfeeling, because, his business having made him hard and silent, she had no proper outflow of affections; but now that she has no longer a rival in the form of business, she can pour forth all the wealth of her nature before him. Though poor in money, he finds himself possessor of treasures of which, till now, he was unconscious.

RICHES GIVE CULTURE.

Nor are we blind to the advantages of the possession of wealth. It is a noble gift, if one know how to use it well. We speak not now of almsgiving, and other charitable uses, though he will use it badly who neglects these things, and will dry up the fountain of the best affections which God hath implanted in his nature, and which, as streams of the water of life, might bless and beautify many a desert spot where sadness and misery have made their home. We speak more generally of the culture which riches well used can impart. It must be confessed that, though poverty does develope some virtues, it stunts and deforms others. You will find it hard to cultivate the graces of life on slender means. The poor man may cultivate vegetables and common flowers, but it requires riches to erect the green-house, where exotic plants may bloom and shed their fragrance. There are the rare flowers of gentility, and elegant manners, and agreeable courtesies, which do not readily flourish around humble homes. Learning and travel cannot be had, without the leisure and ease which riches give. It has been said that it requires three or four generations of the wealthy to produce the gentleman. There are exceptions to the rule both ways. You

will find in cabins and cottages true gentility or courtesy. You will too often find boors among lords and peers. But the rule is the other way, and without doubt the finest and most cultured of the children of men are to be found among those who are born of nobility. Now and then we are scandalized with the history of roughs and roués of peerage descent or of princely alliance, but we believe there is among the families of the rich and titled a vast amount of not only high culture, but real worth and excellence; and notwithstanding the unholy fame of marquises and peers who have disgraced their coronets,—notwithstanding the detestable use to which the sons of the rich have often put their wealth,—we can well understand that, for the proper uses and advantages of wealth, a man may earnestly strive to amass fortune for the children whom he loves, and whom he would place in a position to acquire the learning and the graces to which his own hard lot made him a stranger. He hopes with all the love of a father's heart that his children will be kind, and gentle, and noble, and generous, and worthy, and that the riches he has acquired for them will be used for only good purposes. It is no small affliction to him to find that all his wealth by evil travail has melted away, and that his family will have to sink down into the pit where penury

elbows poverty, where harshness produces coarseness,—where, too, disappointment sends its wail over blighted hopes and ruined prospects.

GOD SEES BEST.

The ruined man, however, should always recollect that God knows the future better than he, and that those riches might have been kept, not for his own hurt, but for the hurt of his children. The many instances he has seen of the wild spendthrift life of young persons should at least reconcile him to the view, that if his children have been deprived of the advantages, they have been liberated from the perils of riches, and that there is still, in the lonely parts of this good world of the heavenly Father, many a situation of usefulness and beauty and comfort, where His children may be happy and contented. God metes out His measures of happiness as full, it may be, to the sons of toil as to the possessors of wealth. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, and hunger and labour give a zest of enjoyment, which is, and must be, for ever unknown to surfeited abundance.

DISHONEST FAILURE.

No notice is taken by Solomon specially of failures with the full hand. These may come under the head

of the various injustices which he saw practised under the sun. Of such cases we have simply to say that stealing is comparatively respectable. With no better right to the goods or monies of which he becomes possessed than the thief, the dishonest bankrupt has also forfeited confidence. It is a fair question, we doubt not, how much a man who has spent a large portion of his life in honest work should have, when some misfortune comes crashing into his business, sweeping away all the hard earnings of a lifetime. But when there have been plans laid to defraud, when business has been engaged in to secure by failure a competency unsought by honest work, why, we repeat it, *thieving* is respectable compared with that kind of work ; and yet many a man carries his head high, and is taken by the hand in good society, and has his alliance sought by other worldlings—probably no more honest than himself, if the opportunity offered—who has been thoroughly dishonest in his dealings and settlements. Instead of being driven out of respectable society like the thief, the man who has made money even by failure is feted and caressed. Yet he is in a bad case, almost worse than the housebreaker, as far as repentance and reformation go. There is some hope of repentance for him on whom is the ban and frown of society. The thief on the cross, the publican in

the temple, the Magdalene at the feet of Jesus—all feel the soft spirit of penitence nestling in their breasts as a tender dove, and the kind hand of pardon on their heads; but the man who puts his trust in riches, and cannot trust in God—who trusts in riches so much, that for them he swindles, and yet, wonderful to say, may still have the apparent respect of his fellow-men—why, how should such a one ever repent, or believe, or enter the kingdom of heaven? If riches be always dangerous, how fearfully is it true that ‘the getting of riches by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro by them that seek death!’

SPECULATION AND FAILURE.

But failure resulting from dishonest speculation is another form of bankruptcy. There is much of this sort of thing. The travail in such case is especially evil. In all speculation there is risk; but in some businesses the transactions are more allied to the gaming-table than to commerce. It is not easy to draw the line of distinction, and it may be that a plausible apology could be offered for gold and stock gambling. We suppose these things must be bought and sold, and that there is no more harm in their purchase and sale than in that of sugars and teas. The harm lies specially in two things: first,

in engaging in the transactions without sufficient capital, or in using capital not our own ; and secondly, in those schemes for rigging the market and making corners, by which ruin is entailed, not in the regular course of trade, of demand and supply, but by dearths and plethora artificially created. We suppose we need say nothing to those who have come away out of these transactions winners. They can laugh at our jejune views of their immorality. But as to those who have failed in such dishonest schemes, we have simply to say, You deserved to fail ; and if in after life there should be nothing in your hand, you may console yourselves with this, the only consolation left, that you have not at least the terrible burden to carry on your conscience of riches dishonestly acquired. If you make the sincere attempt by faith and repentance, you may get through the needle's eye and become possessor of the heavenly riches, while Dives, who made his grand pile in the transaction where you found financial ruin, finds himself hampered and hindered ; indeed, probably he never thinks of such a thing as the kingdom of heaven at all, but settles down quietly to his enjoyments, saying, ' Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; eat, drink, and be merry ;' and knows not till the fiat goes forth, ' This night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

A POOR SOUL.

Some people will have plenty of riches then ; and if a place could be purchased in heaven, they would be sure of it. But it is the soul that is required of them, and they have not got that ; at least, it is so mean, unjust, unrighteous, dishonest, sneaking, that it were far better they had none at all to offer. We have sometimes smiled at an ignorant Papist, when, in the language of his creed and country, he spoke of '*making his soul*.' There is much meaning in this phrase. We do not think the Papist's way of work in this spiritual manufacture is the best. A long course of fasts and mechanical prayers are not well fitted to make a noble, 'just, generous, and sanctified soul, such as we could wish' to render up to God when we are summoned to present it, bad or good, to our Judge. But if penance only meant repentance, and if, instead of unmeaning ceremonies, faith that is justified by works—faith, that in Jesus sees the propitiation and the pattern, and goes forth in the freedom and assurance of pardon to do the deeds of justice and charity on the earth—were substituted, we could see a soul growing in beauty and value, which would make it no unfit offering to present even before the throne of that King and Judge who has given to every one his talent, saying,

‘Occupy till I come.’ Everything which prevents or impedes the soul’s growth, no matter how splendid, no matter how sweet, is dangerous to our fortune, and at the last may issue in writing against us, in the irreversible handwriting of God: ‘Spiritual and eternal bankrupt;’ ‘His riches have perished by an evil travail, and there is nothing in his hand.’

THE KEY OF RICHES LOST.

Sometimes the capacity of producing riches perishes by evil travail. The instrument, the key by which the treasure of riches is unlocked, is gone; and then, indeed, there is nothing in the hand of the weak, wrecked constitution, or the debbled brain. Work sometimes produces these sad effects, but folly oftener. The tradesman is thrown from some roof, or gets entangled in some machinery, or is exposed to some inclemency of the sun or frost, and while escaping with life, his key of labour is lost, with which he was accustomed to find subsistence for himself and family, for whom there seems in the future no bread. The man of letters, like Swift, becomes as the tree blighted at the top: the brain refuses to work, and the fancy to plume her wings, and he, too, finds the fount of life run dry. The professional man at the bar, in the pulpit, or in the sick-room, has become weak, and his vocation is

gone. In these cases there is room for a deeper sorrow, surely, than when even the savings of a lifetime are all swept away, but the power and faculty of work are still left. We should not mourn for the loss of fortune as we mourn for the loss of ability to make it. Let the waters of the stream be dried up; but if the spring be preserved, what matters it? The world may have been to us a desert of sand, absorbing all the wealth which flowed from the well of our labour; but still, while the living waters flow, there will be an oasis of greenness, blessing and beautifying our being. But the time will come, sooner or later, to us all, when all will be absorbed

Leaf by leaf the roses fall;
Drop by drop the streams run dry;
One by one, without recall,
Summer roses fade and die.'

And so it is with the vital powers. However husbanded, they will at last be exhausted. Protect the tree of life as you will, it will at last die, its sap exhausted, its energy expended. The fountain of life sends down some drops of its sweet waters, but its source is in the other world, to which we must all repair, that we may enjoy immortal life, and never know decay.

A BROKEN CONSTITUTION.

And yet there are worse bankruptcies than those produced by work or accident. We speak of losses of the vital powers and capacities of usefulness by vice, gluttony, intemperance, unlawful indulgence. These sap the foundations of the constitution. The physician may come and shore up the building for a while, and do some bit of healing patchwork beneath the rickety, broken walls, but it will be a poor concern ever after. A fast life is proverbially short. Fast men do not spend their money faster than their capital of being. Fast men figure most in the bankruptcy courts of both civil, social, and physical life. Health is often gone before the fortune is spent; and sometimes a poor demoralized creature, shaking, paralysed, still enacts the debauchee in the great farce of pleasure-hunting—the scorn and ridicule of those, with energies yet unbroken, fast following to represent the same character.

LOST CHARACTER.

And there is yet another bankruptcy of which we must speak,—bankruptcy of character. It is still possible among men to act wildly and foolishly, and still possess a reputation for honour, up-

rightness, and truth. We recognise the distinction. There are grades in morals. There are virtues that support the foundations of health; there are those which sustain society. The vices which affect self, and those which tend to overturn the social fabric, though springing from the same source, are not dealt with as alike bad. 'The poor fellow does no one harm but himself,' is a palliation which we generally indeed falsely apply to the one, but our indignation is reserved for the swindler, the thief, the robber, the murderer. We admit—with, it may be, a protest—the one to our society; the other we send, when we can, to our prisons and penitentiaries. We do not say that there is any radical injustice in our distinction. Society is generally just *to itself* in its decrees. What for our present purpose we have to remark upon, is the sad bankruptcy which comes upon the outcasts of society. They are wealthy, perhaps—ah, they are poor! Even the very people who pay court to and seek the society of the knaves who have secured wealth by villany and yet have eluded the law, despise them in their heart of hearts. They may meet them with smiles, and yet they would rejoice in their hearts to hear of their downfall. Oh yes, the secret voice of humanity is the whisper of God. Don't take the babble of public places as the deci-

sion of either the human or the divine. Both God and man pronounce them moral bankrupts. But there are those not wealthy who are also bankrupts in character,—thieves who have no standing in the community, swindlers whose hand it would be esteemed pollution to touch, robbers over whom the law throws no protection. Oh, are not these poor—very poor? They have nothing in their hand. They are shut out from all honest places of toil and reward. They have hunger to appease, cold to fend themselves from, desires vast and various to satisfy; and what shall they do? Why, society has said to them in words, ‘Be honest,’ and in reality, ‘Go and steal.’ There is no mistaking this fact. And so there is constituted a society of these moral bankrupts, holding certain doubtful relations to those who are on the verge of moral insolvency, as the bar-room keepers, and receivers under the rose and with due precautions of stolen goods, but banded together in every great human hive to prey on industry, with a code of laws of their own, subversive of property and morality. Their riches of character have perished by some evil work, and there is nothing in their hand.

BANKRUPTS IN HEAVEN’S CHANCERY.

But however we may distinguish between one

class of vice and another, are we not all bankrupt before God? 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' We may be all rich and increased in goods of a moral kind, and feel as though we had need of nothing, and yet be poor, and wretched, and miserable, and naked. Comparing ourselves with others, we may be fair and comely in character; but what are we before God? We do not assume that all are hypocrites, or sepulchres painted and furbished, concealing dead men's bones, or that we are graves green and flowery, with corruption beneath the sod of character; nor that there is a haunted chamber in every house, or a skeleton in every heart, or a death's-head shaking its gory locks before every eye. No; but there is a voice which is heard, because spoken by every soul,—the voice of conscience, saying, And I, too, am a sinner; I, too, have nothing with which I may come before God. My life, ah, how purposeless and useless! my most golden deeds, ah, how dim and drossy! my tree of being, ah, how flowery yet fruitless! What opportunities of good have I let slip! What wealth of light and love have I dissipated! My religious services have been formalities without a soul. I have paid my gratitude to God with the base coin of hollow words. I have to my neighbour, whom I should have loved as myself, given

too often scorn and contempt, making his heart bleed. I have retailed the story which was untrue, if I have not made it. I have launched the sarcasm which burned up the tender feeling of my friend. I have neglected good advice. I have turned piety into ridicule, and profanity into a pastime. I have been angry without cause, and so done murder in my heart. I have grieved the good. I have encouraged the bad. In my business I have trafficked in shams,—in my pleasures listened to and enjoyed the songs of the sirens. I have sailed through the seas of debauchery, and plucked the forbidden fruits which God commanded me not to eat; and if now I were to appear before God, I could not answer Him for one of a thousand of my sins. If I look over my account, I see a long list of debts which I can never pay. I am a bankrupt before God. My riches of being have perished by evil travail, and there is nothing in my hand.

A GOOD FIRM.

What shall this bankrupt soul do? There is a voice which says, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and fine raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear.' There is one rich, noble Being who has visited our world

that He might carry His capital into the bankrupt concern of humanity, and make all rich who would join His society. He will have you buy an interest in this great firm by a formal and real renunciation of your past life, by a sorrow so abiding that you shall no more return to it. He makes you rich by proclaiming a free acquittance from all that vast debt which made you despair, and prevented you from the thought and the power to begin a holier and truer life. He promises you His aid. He will be with you; in spirit He will be with you. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. Only faith in Him must, as you see, connect you with Him. He cannot become yours nor you His otherwise. How He *was* so rich, how He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich, we cannot now enlarge upon. Try Him, and you shall know. You are poor enough; you cannot well be worse. You have made attempts, have you not, to do something acceptable, and to be something good? You have long tried it, have you not? If you have not, it is time you should begin. Oh, there is no pity too deep for the moral bankrupt who knows not the depth of his poverty! But have you not all said, looking to the vast debt, Who shall free me from the bondage of this spiritual death, which having accumulated such sums as I am unable to

pay, prevents me from doing any good thing before God? Well, try Him. See if He will not place you in a state of pardon and peace. See if He will not set you in the way of duty, and of the attainment of 'the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto and upon every one that believeth.'

THE DIVINE BANKRUPT LAW.

The gospel is the proclamation of a great bankrupt law to the human race, of the provisions of which each one is asked freely to accept. Of the policy and propriety of such a law, no one who knows the circumstances will doubt. There may be questions relative to the means by which such a law became possible, but none as to the necessity of it, if man was ever to be made righteous—changed from bad to good. There is no sinner who, when he wants to be what his conscience tells him he ought to be, but feels the need of assurance that his past life is not to be laid to his charge. We hold that you might as well ask a man to be industrious against whom an insatiate creditor of fabulous amounts was ever pressing for payments, as think a sinner might become what he ought to be while he believes that God is unpropitious to him. How shall he begin to serve an implacable God who de-

mands, as the first essential element of service, that it be of love? But after forgiveness for all that vast debt—not without suffering and sorrow, a divine suffering and sorrow—love is easy. Nothing is difficult here but faith—belief that God should forgive because He had suffered—nothing difficult but to believe that the sufferings of God manifest in the flesh were but the type and image of what God had always been enduring on behalf of man, and what the good Spirit of God is always bearing for man, even now for this ungodly generation. Only think of God at this moment bearing your sins, suffering on account of your sins; and no less than this is implied in the answer given by Jesus to Thomas: ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, Show us the Father?’ God’s atonement is continuously going forward; the burden of sin is continually being borne by the Divine One, and we are by our sins continually crucifying the Son of God afresh; and He is willing to bear all, and endure all, that He may induce you to leave your bankrupt condition as sinners, and enter on the work and reward of the possessor of ‘the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto and upon every one that believeth.’

XVIII.

THE HOUSES OF MOURNING AND MIRTH.

‘It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning: but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.’—ECCLES. vii. 2-5.

THE TWO INVITATIONS.

IF two invitations were given us at the same time, for the same day, the one to a funeral and the other to a marriage, or the one to a scene of sorrow which only death could produce, and the other to some festive gathering, leaving out of view the call of duty, we can hardly suppose we should hesitate to accept the invitation which called us to feast and rejoice, rather than that which required us to robe ourselves in the sable proprieties of grief. And yet we should do so with a feeling that probably we had not made the right choice: we might find ourselves thinking, ‘After all, it might be better, more to my advantage, to go to the house of mourning. There will be good cheer where I am going,

and mirth and music. I will get a good laugh, which will be better medicine than all the drugs of the apothecary. I will carry away only agreeable reminiscences, and yet it may be that I should have a more profitable experience if I were to go to the house of that afflicted family, from whom death hath taken away the joy of the heart and the delight of the eye.' Still it is not natural that we should prefer the pain to the pleasure; and so our heart leads our feet to the house of mirth and festivity, though a higher reason doubts the propriety of the step.

THE SUPERIOR ADVANTAGE OF SORROW.

The theme, then, on which we are called to dwell, is the superior advantage of sorrow. It is not to be thought that we are never to go to the house of mirth or festivity, or that we are to devote ourselves to asceticism. Neither duty nor profit calls us to the renunciation of joy. It were strange, indeed, if God, who made happiness the rule and pain the exception in His work of creation, were to ask of us devotion to sorrow. Pain is indeed an element in the constitution of nature, and not introduced without wise reasons. It has advantages great and many,—to call attention to dangers which are ever imminent in all labour and enjoyment, to correct and restrain the extravagant use of His gifts, to give a zest

to pleasure itself, to elevate and ennoble the sufferer by patience, and to educate us into a hope and aim after the heavenly and eternal. It is a part of that constitution of our nature by which we are led to seek for a rest which yet remaineth for the people of God. It is a necessary portion of the medicinal cup of a being that is corrupt, morally sick—that, as a matter of fact, was destined to fall, and that needs an economy of sorrow to restore him to the possession of the righteousness of God. Some would have advised God, when He was selecting the various ingredients of the composite constitution of the world and man, not to put pain in. When they saw its nature, its agonies and writhings and cries, its separations, and its carnage, they would, through very zeal for the character of the great world Artificer, as well as through sympathy for His creatures, and especially for man, have earnestly remonstrated against the dark and dismal element, as liable to produce the very gravest doubts regarding the moral character of the Creator. Do we not find that this mixed constitution is now the great difficulty of those who puzzle their brains to find some plausible excuse for the introduction of evil? And do we not find that many take refuge in a scepticism which, flying away from the doctrine of an intelligent God, adopts some pantheism, or natural necessitarianism,

which being the controller of God, is really God? To us that economy which, with much that is joyous, yet includes all the sublimities of sorrow, is the most beautiful; and we feel perfectly assured that our world would not have been half so glorious as it is, if it had not become the theatre where are enacted tragedies of grief as well as pastoral dramas, where the actors wandered evermore in Elysian fields, bathed in flashing fountains, plucked flowers, and ate only pleasant fruits. Paradise was very meet for the cradle of human infancy; and yet the outside world, even with its sorrows and pains, thorns and thistles, its wild untamed forests, its upheaved hills, its earthquakes and storms, and its unharnessed ocean, is more to our taste. We almost think we could leave, after a short sojourn, the happy bowers of Eden, to learn what rough experience might teach us,—to drink at the fountain of danger, ascend the hill of difficulty, to front the terrors of the storm, and brave death itself. It is the philosopher in his study, not the man of action in the world, that finds the scheme of mingled pleasure and sorrow incompatible with the goodness of God; and every time the youth leaves all the comforts and affluence and enjoyment of home, to face the perils and penalties of travel and labour, he gives his imprimatur to the scheme of God, and certifies the wisdom

which produced the chequered and various world of sorrow and joy.

THE TWO ATTRACTIONS.

We find, then, these two attractions correspondent to the mixed constitution of our being and nature,—one to pleasure, and the other, if not to grief, at least to that which will produce it,—one to quiet enjoyment, and the other to the labour and the battle. The latter of these attractions, indeed, may be held only to be to that which in the long run will produce a superior happiness and a deeper repose. We seek sorrow as the salt which will preserve, or the vinegar which will give zest to the chief joys of life. We want a desert or a moor bordering on our garden, where we may sometimes wander, that by the heightened contrast we may know how fair are our flowers, how sweet our fruit. We put up with the discomforts of a camp life, that we may enjoy all the better our homes and our tables. ‘Joy never feasts so high as when the first course is of misery.’ And perhaps the proportion in which we want such experience is about the ratio which evil has to good in the world. For is there not much exaggeration in our talk about the ills of life? The necessary ills are but few: sickness itself is in small proportion to health; want is rare;

and although death comes to all, it is after a long period of deep enjoyment. No doubt the cup of bereavement is bitter to drink, and the sorrows of departure hard to bear. In all our highest enjoyments, let us acknowledge there is, when they are taken from us, a corresponding degree of pain. The more beautiful the object enjoyed, the intenser the sorrow for its loss. And yet our selfishness may sadly exaggerate these griefs. The poet of the *Night Thoughts* is not to be thanked for the moodiness which most of his verses cause, as in the following strain :

'O mortals, short of sight, who think the past
O'erblown misfortunes shall still prove the last !
Alas ! misfortunes travel in a train,
And oft in life form one perpetual chain.
Fear buries fear, and ills on ills attend,
Till life and sorrow meet one common end.'

And in another passage, the effect of which is surely bad :

'Know, smiler ! at thy peril art thou pleased ;
Thy pleasure is the promise of thy pain.
Misfortune, like a creditor severe,
But rises in demand for her delay ;
She makes a scourge of past prosperity,
To sting thee more and double thy distress.'

After that, let us drink out of cups made of skulls, let us burn our pleasant pictures, portray with charcoal dark scenes on all our walls, revert

to sackcloth and ashes for our gayest clothing. Let marriages be celebrated with all funereal emblems, and let us have in our music of mirth at least a chorus of groans. Let us wear iron spikes, which may give us sharp pain should we laugh ! Why, this popular poet should have been a flagellant monk, and should have wielded the lash to the march of his blank verse. But he was wiser than that. Practically, this poet Young was one of the heartiest, life-enjoying of mortals, and was a great world-hunter. He was only getting rid of some of his humour by the melancholy vehicle of his poetry, which has already carried several generations of moody beings along the rough by-ways of complaint. The Wretches and Childe Harolds of the poetic world have, too, given sentiment an unhealthy tone. They have portrayed pleasure, only to show the worm in the bud, or the vile trail of the serpent over the vines and berries. The shining waters, whose music you hear in their flowing numbers, have always a slimy sediment, in which the horse-leech lies ready to bite, and suck the bather's blood. We do not like this, not that there is not some substratum of truth in the representations, but because there is the exaggeration of the reality, and because the true function of the poet is not merely to *portray what is*, but to elevate, by a just selection of objects, his

readers to what they ought to be, and to do, and to think, and feel. We are elective beings, putting out of sight the disagreeable, and bringing into view the lovely and of good report; and we deny that any one, be he poet or preacher, has any right to dig up his ideal graves in marriage parlours, or pour bitter gall into our tea-cups. It is true that there is death as well as life, suffering as well as joy, in the world, and that the day of prosperity is set over against the day of adversity; but it is at least a needless anticipation to convert the real prosperity into an ideal adversity, and to hang the pall of death around breathing, palpitating, rejoicing life. There is, however, still a use of adversity and suffering and misery which we must make, for all these sentiments of ours must be used by measures, not as though they were seas into which all the streams of thought must flow, but as lakes into which our thoughts run, to pass away into others of different forms. And so, while we would say still that we are not needlessly to bring up the uncomfortable and mournful before the eye of our mind, there are necessities of our nature which lead us to the death-bed and the sepulchre,—which make us visit the house of sorrow and lamentation, and that, at times, in preference to scenes of joy and gladness. Better to go to the house of mourning than the house of mirth.

SENSITIVE NERVES.

Some have such a sensitive nature, that they are afraid to approach any scene where their nerves may sustain a rude shock. Hence they are ignorant of a portion of the economy of providence, and remain mere mirrors of festal scenes. They are like daguerreotypists, who can make pictures only when the sun shines. Night, with her solemn shadowy influences, is unrepresented in their mental gallery of portraits. The sublimities of the storm need painting by other hands. We would advise all such to come within the ranges and influences of the wild sorrows of life, that they may know the deeper mysteries of being. In the sick-chamber, and by the deathbed, and the open grave, and the board where are vacant places, they may learn much they could never know in the house of mirth. The knowledge, too, thus acquired, will send its roots deeper and spread its branches wider into the regions of supernatural and eternal being, than that which is merely of festivities and mirth. God conducts His people to Himself through dark ways; for there the ear is open to hear—to catch any voice which may guide to light and peace. There is not much likelihood of sound conclusions on our being and destiny amid the riot of feasts and the mirth of

assemblies. The philosophy of the Epicureans is rather shallow. Sage reasoners, surely, those are who are nodding over wine-cups ! Their principles, like themselves, are rather inclined to be unsteady in their application. Ball-rooms, too, especially where fast dances are indulged in—places where human nature is turned into a whirligig—are not schools of wisdom. We do not like to see our young people turned into tops and spinning-jennies. The time, we think, might be better employed. The experience of a funeral might be better—more conducive to wise thought and rational decision of grave questions. If we want to know the will of God, and lead the perfect way of life, we shall often reject the invitation which leads to the house of mirth, and wend our thoughtful way to the house of mourning. We may distil wisdom from tears. On our own account, then, that we may be made wiser, better, and in the long run happier, we shall be advised by the wise man, that ‘ it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting ; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.’

PROPORTION IN SORROW.

Of course, as we have said, we are not all the time to be engaged in the attendance and ministry

of sorrow. We only urge that such an attention shall be given to it as the proportion it bears to life needs. The words are addressed to the frivolous and the gay. They may even be of misleading import to those addicted to melancholy. No doubt truth is truth ; but yet its application may require various treatment in separate cases. The suitability of any truth depends on the persons to whom it is to be applied. It may be that mirthful scenes are more to be recommended in many cases. People who are continually brooding over their sorrows, hatch new miseries. Yet the object of sorrow is, that it may be the mother of joy. After Abraham has mourned, he yet says : ‘ Bury my dead out of my sight.’ The days of mourning for the departed should come to an end. While some, however, would prolong indefinitely the funeral obsequies, others would shun their presence, or end them with undue haste. These last need especially to consider the maxim of the wise man. There is good for you in this ministry of sorrow. Even children may reap benefit in this harvest of death. You young people, accustomed to gaieties, will do well to visit sick friends and dying friends, and bereaved friends. If it should make you reflect on the frivolity of your past life, that will not be any harm to you. If it should make you think of what you are coming to,

will not that set you on some useful course of life ? It may be, too, you will learn in some dull way how to bear sufferings which must actually come upon yourselves. Is there not some preparation that can be made ? Generals go to battle-fields, in the issue of which they have no special interest, that they may learn how to conduct war when their country needs their skill. Is there nothing to be learned from the experience of others in that war from which there is no discharge ? Those who wish to do anything well, see how others have done it. It may be that we take up the view of Dr. Johnson, who said it was not worth learning the art of dying, it was such a short time one could have any need of it ; and were the uses of the experience of others in death confined to this learning of how to die, we should accord with the views of the great Englishman. But there is more. We are not like the beasts, which, when they find death near, retire to some obscure place, where they can unseen die, all the others of the herd leaving them to meet their mortal enemy alone. Men generally do not wish to be then alone, nor does friendship then leave the departing. Attracted to the scene of the terrific struggle, we view it as some tragedy. There is a spell ; but there is also a lesson. It is not the lesson of dying, but the lesson of death. It is not

the peculiar testimony of the dying, though that is not to be despised, but it is the realization of the fact of mortality, and, if we are wise, the urgent pressure upon our notice of the importance of life as the day of work, and of grace, and of salvation. It tells us, 'Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device in the grave, to which thou art hastening.' It says, 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;' and whatever be the form of testimony which it takes, it teaches us surely that the principles which animated the being shall not perish in passing through the dark billow, but come forth in renewed vitality—the evil for a work and remuneration of evil, and the good for the activities and rewards of righteousness and holiness.

NOT THE USE, BUT THE DUTY, BRINGS ENJOYMENT.

But it is not so much the intellectual or moral lesson, however good, with which we are impressed. If we go, strange to say, for such purpose merely, we shall most likely miss our aim. It is curious, but true, that if we would derive all the advantage of a good act, we must put the advantage to ourselves out of our view. Happiness-hunters generally miss their game till they cease to pursue it. It then comes to them of its own accord. Let a man employ

himself in some way of usefulness, and he will see what flowers of joy spring up all around his steps. This is especially so in works of benevolence. If we engage in these with a view to the reward, we shall be disappointed and disgusted ; but if without such a view, we shall come away like bees laden with the honey of flowers. I do not then say to you, Go to the house of mourning and affliction that you may become the possessors of experience ; but, Go that you may lighten the troubled hearts,—go that you may bring peace to those wild, storm-tossed souls,—go that you may bear balm to hurt minds, that in sympathy you may take and bear half the sorrows of those grief-laden ones, and you shall come away with joy, and with the lessons of a rich experience. It is impossible to keep out of our view the good effects which will flow from the ministry of friendship to yourself ; but these need not be first in our reckoning, nor have the chief prominence. We must just be self-renouncing and sympathetic and kind to those who are in grief, because it is our duty, to which we are impelled by the highest principles of our own as well as God's nature. In a blessed experience, we will find it better for ourselves. Our souls will be more noble, and more fully developed. We shall stand on high among our fellows ; and all the higher, that they cannot detect that we were led

to such action by any of those unworthy motives which terminate solely in self, and which are the mainspring of a world that is driven in all its various motions, and produces all its wondrous results, by the impulse of a dominant selfishness. This, too, is true religion. Pure religion and undefiled, is to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and keep one's self unspotted from the world.

TO WHAT HOUSES OF MOURNING ?

There cannot be imposed upon us a duty to go to every house of mourning. We may ask, Where, then ? as the lawyer, Who is my neighbour ? We suppose those where our help, counsel, and comfort are especially needed. It would have been impertinence in the good Samaritan to have pushed in, offering his services, if he had found the wounded man properly tended and cared for by the priest and Levite who had passed by on the other side. No better rule can be given than, Is my help needed ? We do not wish to send you forth animated by the idea that your presence is everywhere acceptable, and that your comforts are always precious. Those threadbare words of yours about the uses of affliction and the need of regeneration, are not always agreeable flags to flaunt in the face of grief. We have felt all the difficulties of the ministry

of sorrow. Oh it is easy, comparatively, to stand in a pulpit and elucidate principles and expound duties, but it is the hardest thing in life to carry a few drops of comfort to the anguished heart! It would seem as though our words were as chaff, from which the corn had been abstracted. Shall we refrain our step, then, from the house of grief? Not so. Our very presence is something, and our words, after all, just the very best that can be spoken; and, amid all their chaffiness, who knows that there are not still remaining some kernels of comfort? If we bring out the words of Jesus on such occasion, too, with appropriate selection, have they not still power to soothe? Well, only sometimes. Sometimes they are our greatest trouble. We see Him weeping over Jerusalem, and saying, 'Your house is left unto you desolate,' and find that His words echo through these chambers, from which has departed the rejecter and despiser of His mercy and love. We hear Him say, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' There is not much comfort

to persons who have left this life doing the deeds of life, is there? Ah, you do not know the difficulties and griefs of the ministry of sorrow. The comforts of Christianity are all very well, and come with sweet, soothing influence to the soul when our departed have been among those who have lived the life of God; but it is different in many cases. And yet, who are we, that we should judge? Who knows how far the mercy of God may reach beyond the echo of His condemnatory words? And so we go forth 'universalists' in our ministry of sorrow, if 'particularists' in our doctrinal expositions. Inconsistent! Oh yes; and yet happy inconsistency! Shall I preach to you that salvation is yours, no matter what may be your life? No, you say, that would be deleterious, of sadly demoralizing tendency. And then, too, shall we refuse to hold out a hope in the mercy of God in Christ to that weeping, mourning widow, that always found good in *him*, even in his baseness,—from those tender children, who now, after all his failings, feel that he was their dear, dear father? No. And yet, after all, our inconsistency, do what we will, stares us in the face, and has the effect of taking away at least the heartiness of our consolation in many cases, drying up, as it were, the most assuring and tender words of Jesus in our throats, as we speak of the

resurrection and the life, and the house not made with hands, and the New Jerusalem, and we go through our 'consolations' perfunctorily, as the solemn undertaker performs his. We do not know but we often feel as though we would rather not go to the house of mourning, because we can do so little to lighten the affliction that presses down with terrible weight on each brain and heart in an afflicted family.

A HAPPY VISIT TO A MOURNFUL HOUSE.

It is otherwise in many cases. The deathbed on which lies the body, has been also the birthbed of a soul that now enjoys the life and love of God. Our sorrow is but the minor notes that mingle, if we could hear it, with the angels' song as they accompany our departed friend to the gate of the Golden City. Weep on, we may say, for there is yet melody in your mourning on the march to heaven. And again we may say, Weep no more, for the spirit has gone within the gates, and will no more be gratified with the song of sorrow. Oh, there is a great difference surely between the sorrow that is without and with hope! We would like to go always to the one. It is a hard task to go to the house of the other.

THE SADDER THE HOUSE, THE MORE NEEDFUL
THE VISIT.

And yet that is the very place we ought to go to, just the place where we are most needed. We are not needed where death has been an angel to conduct the spirit *home*. There is wealth of comfort there, and our poor consolations can hardly be missed. But it is where there are the agony and the despair that we are wanted. We must not leave the traveller because he is robbed and badly wounded. It will be a hard task to set this poor mourner on the journey of life again, but we are bound to do it. We must pour in the oil, and make him drink such wine of consolation as we carry with us, and have him tended that he may recover. The good Samaritan teaches us all this.

POOR COMFORT AT THE BEST.

One thing appalls us. It is the little that we can do. It was perhaps something for Queen Elizabeth to write to a mother who had lost her son, that she would be comforted in time. And yet how coldly this falls upon the mother's ear! There is truth in the statement that time will be our comforter, but people in sorrow do not believe that truth just then. And so it is as though we were speaking falsehoods.

Happily, in all bereavements nature brings opiates, and day by day administers them; and so the grief gradually subsides, and becomes a quiet, solemn feeling, and at last changes its form and hue so much, as almost to be recognised as a pleasure. The sorrow has been turned into a joy. Oh, wonderful healing, transforming power! We should bless the good God who makes these grand transmutations. We might have been so constituted that pain should always remain pain, or even that it should increase evermore; but it is not so. In the subtle chemistry of the affections it is at last eliminated, or remains only as a memory which we would not let perish—a memory fragrant and beautiful as the most innocent joy. Thus nothing is lost in the good universe of God—not even sin—much less sorrow.

MAXIMS FOR MOURNERS.

And this we may say, when we have decided to visit the house of mourning, not that others have suffered as well as you,—for there is not much comfort in that,—but that nothing is lost in the economy of affliction; and that probably in a future state we may find that we have had ‘just the exact amount of misery and trouble which was requisite for our nature;’ that God has made sorrow one of those

things to be tried by all men, and that one cannot be what he ought to be without it; and that as the Captain of our salvation has been made perfect by suffering, so every one who is a soldier of the cross must be. In this our faith is different from the ancient faiths, and from even modern philosophy, as in a passage quoted from a modern dramatist by Helps:

'In the young pagan world
Men deified the beautiful, the glad,
The strong, the boastful, and it came to naught.
We have raised pain and sorrow into heaven;
And in our temples, on our altars, grief
Stands symbol of our faith, and it shall last
As long as man is mortal and unhappy.
The gay at heart may wander to the skies,
And harps be found there, and the branch of palm
Be put into their hands. Our earthly church
Knows not of such,—no votarist of our faith,
Till he has dropped his tears into the stream,
Tastes of its sweetness.'

Our religion

'Transmutes
Calamity to greatness;'

and so Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. Wherefore He hath attained a name which is above every name. The martyrs, too, who died for the truth, and those other martyrs who have died illustrating the kind-

ness of the cross, in hospitals and sick-rooms, and other ministries in which life was sacrificed, shall all be exalted with Him. And think not, ye whose lot is lowly, and lonely, and much enduring, that because you have had no public sphere, you shall be forgotten. The visit to the prisoner is recorded; the cup of cold water is noted down. The person to whom you have done it may have been poor, and sickly, and worthless, as far as any usefulness to the world; and yet, 'inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

XIX.

INVENTIONS.

‘God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.’—ECCLES. vii. 29.

UPON this passage is usually founded a discourse upon the original righteousness of man, and his state of subsequent depravity by the fall; and if we do not follow the beaten course in enunciating these doctrines, and urging them at the outset, it will not be considered that it is because we have any doubt about the truth of these two great doctrines, or that they are contained in the words of the verse, the latter half of which especially we propose to dwell upon; but simply because we wish to take a view of the text which it very naturally bears, especially a view of it which you will find to stand out in full relief, as the image of man in this nineteenth century, seeking out as he has done, and is doing, invention after invention, and making every new discovery only a stepping-stone to some other structure which may add to his comfort and convenience. Perhaps the doctrine

which it is most natural to find in the text is, that God made man upright in his moral character, but that, turning away from the pursuit of that higher excellence which belongs to the soul, he has busied himself in making discoveries, and in finding inventions which may become substitutes for that higher excellence—seeking his chief happiness in mechanical appliances and in industrial pursuits, in science and art, in building and in mining, in sailing and in steaming, in harnessing the wind and the waterfall to his machinery; in perfecting his workshops and his tools; in filling up the valleys, levelling the hills, reducing the earth to be the obedient servant that brings plenty to his garners; in making its ores his servants, and even imitating the lightning that it may carry his messages to the ends of the earth; in producing everything which can give luxurious ease, or decorate with beauty the person or the home, from the commonest article which is used in our kitchens, to the diamond that sparkles on the brow, or the rich robe which invests the form;—seeking, we say, his chief happiness and finding his chief end in such pursuits as these, while sadly neglectful of that higher attribute of his nature which was his chief glory, and of that higher end for which God made him in His own image, ‘in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.’

WRONG AIMS.

It is no uncommon thing for man to miss the object of his being, and mistake the road to happiness and peace. And does not our universal experience affirm that we are on the wrong road, and that having wandered, like wilful children, away from our duty and our God, we require, just as we are about to quit life, to think of turning into some other path, despised and untrodden, but which, too late, we find we should have been treading all along? And is not this the case with not only the courses which we denominate sinful, but with those industrial pursuits which men approve,—yea, of which God approves,—provided they are in harmony with and subservient to the great objects of life? The child pursues butterflies while he should be at school; the youth pursues pleasure when he should be fitting himself for business; and the man's head is filled with stocks and ventures when he should be holding communion with his God. In each new phase of life he is but a repetition of himself,—neglecting something which is of more importance than that to which he is giving his whole attention; filling up every niche of his being with something less valuable than that which he neglects to secure; gathering the sparkling pebbles, but miss-

ing the pearls and diamonds which might be his possession. We ask, is this not a true picture of our race? Need we refer you to the many who, at the conclusion of their earthly career, have to take up the lamentation of the prophet, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved;' or the sorrow of those who feel, at the end of their eventful history, that they have no felt fitness for that eternal world into which they are about to be introduced,—that with all the riches they may have acquired, they are still poor,—that they are naked and homeless and friendless in the wide universe of God,—that they are out of all harmony with the holiness and peace of heaven,—and that the best they can hope for is annihilation, and the worst is too terrible to conceive? And is not all this but an illustration of the sentiment of the text, that while God made man upright, and placed him in a sphere in which all the parts of his nature might, like a fine-toned instrument of music, discourse the glory of God, one string that might have sent forth the sweetest strains is broken, or so terribly out of tune that dissonance mars all the melody? We can hear nothing in all this noise of wheels, in this ring of hammers, in this everlasting whirring of spindles and churning of steam-engines, but the 'deep base of the mighty world harp,' whose sweetest chords

of moral and spiritual harmony are all unstrung, and only now and then tuned up and swept by the mighty hand of the Spirit of God, and giving forth at fitful intervals some tones which lead us to conjecture what that harmony would be were he as made by his Creator, before, leaving his uprightness, he busied himself with and buried himself beneath his inventions.

AN EXPLANATION.

We have no quarrel with the inventions of men, or with the luxuries which are their product. We do not hold, as some do, that every new machine for the economy of labour is a fraud upon the workman, who cannot compete with the new invention; nor do we object to the thousand comforts and luxuries which these inventions have placed within the reach of all classes. It is true that the invention of new machines has frequently introduced temporary and, as things have been managed, permanent suffering among large classes of the community; and it may be admitted that many seek to fill their houses with too costly furniture, or deck their persons with extravagant finery; and yet we hold that the general results of man's invention are good; that if we compare the state of society when science, art, and machinery were in a low

state, with the state of society in the present day, with all its evils and sores, its hard poverty, and all the miseries that are intermingled with its triumphs, the verdict must be given by all sane minds in favour of the present age. If you look into the accounts of the state of society three hundred years ago, you will find that the peasant enjoys now more than the peer did then, and that any respectable citizen of this place has more comfort than the noble of a former period. One thing will tell us that the former times were not better than these, and that is, that the average length of human life is being lengthened out immensely. From twenty-five to thirty years was formerly a fair average, and in the more barbarous countries, where arts and civilisation have not yet come with their healing power, it is the average still; while in those places where they shed their benign influence, human life may be rated at forty years and upwards. So that, except we affirm that comfort is a curse, and that all these arts and elegances with which we are surrounded are so many evils, and that the extension of the period of human life is no blessing, we do not see how any one can avoid the conclusion, that the various inventions by which all these results are brought about, are so many second causes in the hand of the God of providence, ameli-

orating the condition of man, lightening his lot of labour, and rendering his earthly condition not merely endurable, but enjoyable.

INVENTION BENEFICIAL.

And is it not strange that labour should be reckoned as the offspring of the curse pronounced on man in this life, and death also the wages of sin, and at the same time that any one should reckon that that which lightens labour and lengthens life should be an evil? That the labouring classes should, when any new invention is announced, denounce it, and perhaps band themselves together to destroy it and those who use it, is natural. The objection does not lie against the machine as a lightener of labour, but as a thief or robber that takes away the wages of labour. In this point of view, it is indeed scarcely possible for the man from whose mouth the bread is snatched to view it with equanimity. Here is a man, a human machine, fitted only for one kind of work—by all his education and habits fit for nothing else—with wife and children dependent on him: and, behold, some monster worker of brass and iron steps in and does for half the money what the human machine did before, and there is no bread for the wife and little ones! It is a hard case; and it is a case which has, during this last century, occurred by thousands of

instances. It is a hard case; and it is little satisfaction to the sufferer to tell him that while he suffers, humanity is benefited, that the evil is only temporary and partial, and that out of all this present misery a brighter and better state of things will arise. But though he, suffering as he does, cannot be expected to hear such an argument, or acquiesce in its conclusiveness, yet, standing outside of the circle of suffering as we do, we can form a general survey of the onward course of events, and clearly perceive that all these things are working together for human good, that they are making the earth more productive for her sons, providing room for them within her contracted circle, and scattering blessings among the future generations.

THE ABUSE OF INVENTION.

But why, it might be asked with great propriety, why should those evils be permitted to occur in such an inventive age? Why, when man can take the brass and iron, and form them into things of almost life and intelligence, capable of a precision incomparably beyond the power of the hand that is informed by mind and guided by reason, why can he not so arrange it that these evils, to such a large number, should not be the immediate results of the very perfection of his machinery? Is it possible for

him to perfect these works of art, and is there no intelligence in him to foresee their evils, or wisdom to guard against them? If he were just to exercise his skill, and bring his mind as intently to bear upon the great problem of human happiness, can we think there is no possibility of avoiding those terrible evils which are not only the natural results, in many instances, of inventions, but of those other terrible evils which continue to afflict society—those moral sores which affect all its members, and those miseries which are the results? Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the hurt of the daughter of my people recovered? Why, amid all this civilisation of the nineteenth century, does so much degradation exist? why, amid all the splendour of its cities, so many dark lanes? why, amid the palaces of its merchant princes, are there so many wretched abodes? why, when fortunes are amassed by the few, is famine staring on the many? why, when thousands are lavished on senseless finery, is there no crust in the orphan's hand? And why is all this the apparently legitimate results of inventions?—millionaires at the one end of the scale, beggars at the other,—costly affluence side by side with miserable poverty,—and, to crown all, a great host of swindlers, whose chief end and aim it is to steal and cheat, contrary

to law, or so trimming their sails as to avoid all the quicksands and rocks of legal enactment, to steer into the harbour of wealth and affluence. How is all this in societies of men gifted with intelligence, accomplished in science, eminent in art; whose inventive faculty, ever quick and active, discovers each day some new appliance for use or comfort or pleasure? We think the key to the explanation is to be found in the rather enigmatical language of the text, 'God made man upright, but,' leaving his uprightness, 'he has sought out many inventions.' In other words, forgetting the principles of uprightness, of love to God and love to man, ceasing to be guided by the higher law of his moral and spiritual nature—the law of benevolence and beneficence—he has gone forth, on the principle of selfishness, to seek his own solitary interest, and has found that this was not the way to find peace or produce happiness.

GOD FORGOTTEN.

What is chargeable upon man, then, is, not that he has invented, but that he has neglected the higher invention; not that he has sought out the arts that they might aid him, but that he has not searched after God that he might find Him; not that he has fabricated the useful, but that he has lost all true understanding of the spiritual; not

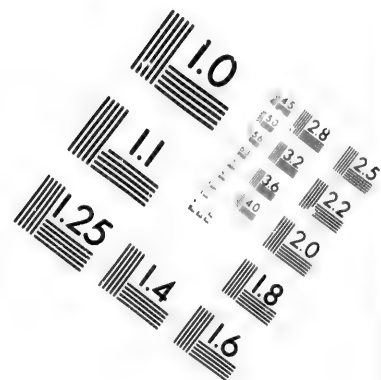
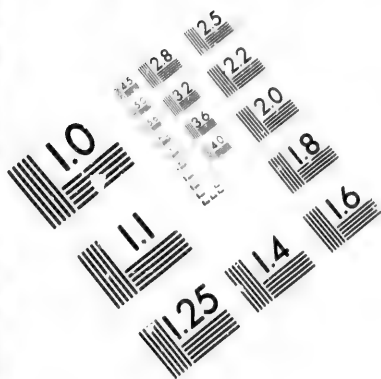
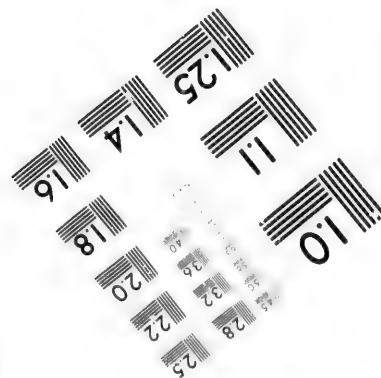
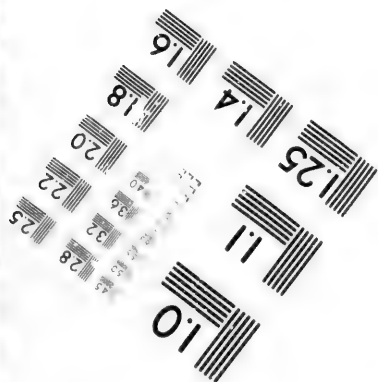
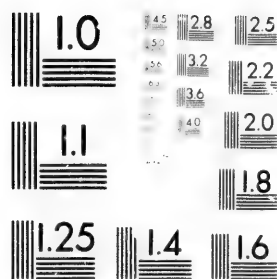
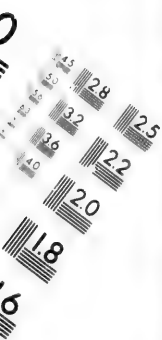


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that he has discovered the laws of the universe, but that he has lost all true insight into the law of his God. While attending to his material wants, he has given himself over to idolatry the most debasing, to principles of action the most fallacious, and to morals the most impure. These charges may be fixed upon all ranks, and lie against all societies; they are applicable to the religions which they have invented, to their legislation, to their commerce, to their business, to their laws of honour and their principles of dealing, to their educational systems, and to their daily intercourse. The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot of society even to the head—from the beggar to the king—there is no soundness in the body politic, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, that have not been bound up, neither mollified with ointment; or, if any have come forth with their medicines from time to time, they were but the nostrums of a quack philosophy, or of a still more poisonous legislation, by which they healed the daughter of the people of humanity slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. Hence ever and anon there arises, amid even the arts and sciences and civilisation of the nineteenth century, the loud wail of poverty, and there is seen the gaunt form of famine, and the bloodthirsty eye of revolu-

tion ; hence the war of class against class, each one resenting its fancied or real wrongs ; hence the great cry of human agony which goes up before God, amid the whirring of machinery ; hence the ruin and the crash of the gigantic commercial schemes, which fail for want of any basis of truth and uprightness : and all this is the anger of a beneficent God against His children who have forgotten Him and their true interest, and in the idol worship of mammon have refused to retain the knowledge of Him in their understanding : all this is the means also by which, in chastisement and in tears, men may be brought to acknowledge that they are miserable offenders, and that verily there is a God that ruleth over the inhabitants of the earth.

This invention is as a great locomotive which has got upon a wrong track, and every now and then buries itself in deep banks, or rushes on to the destruction of the crowds which it whirls along. Is there no possibility of keeping it right ? Shall it continue to destroy its thousands ? Can nothing be done to bring it into harmony with our being ? or rather, can nothing be done to bring our being into harmony with it ? Or must society still work on, subject to all its usual evils and periodic derangements ? Is there, indeed, no balm, and no physician ?

THE REMEDY.

To understand these questions, let us still more closely observe the nature of that derangement which originates all these evils. Humanity is like a machine which has not merely some of its wheels broken—a now natural defect pervades all its parts. Every man sins, every individual is disordered—some more, some less so; but all partake of the defects of the fall. Of all the individuals of our race, not one soul is fully in harmony with God. It is clear, then, that no legislation, however it may ameliorate man's condition, can altogether avert the evil; no charity can cure it. The power which alone can do this, must be such as will effect the restoration of each individual to a healthy condition. You cannot bring happiness to them from without, you must evolve it from within; you must stanch the issue of blood that flows from each individual heart, that he who is fallen from rectitude may become once more upright. Christianity proposes to do this by a renewal of our nature—by recasting each wheel so that it may work in harmony. In no other way does it attempt to mend our natural ills. It will not paint over defects, nor file away external discrepancies; but by the power of the fire of the Spirit of God it proposes to melt us down, and deliver us into the mould of the gospel,—to reform us anew

in Christ Jesus,—to make of us new creatures, not indeed without defects or roughness, but of such strength of principle as will resist the more powerful seductions of sin, and in the operation of the divine life evermore make us work in better harmony with His law. It proposes to implant within us the knowledge of God, faith in God, love to God. It further proposes to implant in man's breast love to his brother, to put into his heart charity, into his mouth truth, into daily life honesty and beneficence. This is what it proposes, and what in many instances it has done, for it is no impossible scheme of philanthropy without adaptation to the end it proposes. It has been successful, is succeeding, and will succeed. Let men but adopt it universally, as some have done, and will it not extinguish those evils which have grown up, and still overshadow with their upas influence all our civilisation? Let men be but really converted,—and how soon that may be, God knoweth—the time may not be so far distant as we think of,—and will not the disgrace of our age be done away? Let men be converted, and, we ask, would there not be a restraint put upon those wild speculations in which men hasting to be rich indulge? would not that system of overreaching in business, which is thought to indicate only the clever man, but which should rather characterize him as a knave,

be done away? Let them become Christians in reality, and would not those commercial and banking swindles, which entail ruin on multitudes, and call down the curse of the widow and orphan, be no more? Would not, if men were Christians, not of the hypocrite order, but of the real stamp, would not hunger always be fed, and want always be supplied? Were men real Christians, would not they try to live within their means? Were men Christians, would not the idle labour with their hands, and serve not with eye-service as men-pleasers? Were they Christians, would any of them suffer as a thief or a busybody? No. There is not an ill which we suffer, not a crime which we commit, but would all be destroyed by the universal adoption of Christianity. And if Christianity has been in the world for eighteen hundred years, and yet has produced such meagre effects—perhaps not so meagre as some would have us suppose—why is it so? Is it because Christianity has failed to those who have tried it, or is it not rather that men have refused the divine remedy of all our ills? They have chosen in Christian countries to take its healing medicine and lock it up in their secret chambers, but they have not taken it according to the prescription of their physician. They have chosen it for an acquaintance, but they have not eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of the Son

of man, and there is no life in them. And hence the religion of the present age is only, in the great majority of instances, a slight improvement on the various forms of religion of other days. And if any one should say that this is the fault of our divine religion, since it has not acted on our nature, we have only to say, No, it is our fault. For if men were only one half as earnestly to seek God and their Saviour from all present ills, as they seek to find out and profit by inventions,—if they were only to give a tithe of the solicitude which they spend on their bodies to solicitude for their moral and spiritual life,—they would be rewarded with the riches of that heavenly inheritance which fadeth not away. And let not any one say that this solicitude and the reward of it are not in accordance with the spirit and teachings of Him who has said, ‘ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ;’ ‘ The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force ;’ ‘ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,—precepts indicative of the necessity of giving our whole mind to the matter of salvation, and promises which imply that honest and persevering endeavour shall not go unrewarded. And if it suggest itself to any of you that, in relation to the destruction of the ills of this life, at least your individual influence as a

Christian would be but little, remember that humanity is only an aggregate of individuals, many of whom may be converted along with you, and through you ; and that though you stood the alone Christian on the face of the world, your influence for good would still be felt on earth, and recognised in heaven. At one time the kingdom of heaven was as a grain of mustard seed, and then it contained the element of life and hope ; and shall it be despaired of now, when it groweth up, and putteth forth branches, and when its leaves are beginning to be recognised as the only healer of the nations ? No. Return, then, to that God from whom you have departed. ' Seek the Lord while He may be found ; call upon Him while He is near.' Plough in righteousness, sow in mercy ; for it is time to seek the Lord, that He may rain down righteousness upon you.

GOOD AND EVIL.

Until that time come when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and when He shall reign over the hearts of men,—till the time when men shall become just, not in the mere sense of abiding by law in their transactions, but until they shall have *just* laws to which they shall give a full and hearty obedience,—we shall continue to have much evil in the world,

and till then especially shall those evils which arise in the struggle between capital and labour continue to exist. Men have for a long time summed up their code of commerce in a principle or two: to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market; to consider that, when the workmen have had their wages, the employer has discharged to them his whole obligation, and that, after the capitalist has by some great manufacture drawn together some thousands of persons, and by their labour has amassed a large fortune, when a time of pressure and difficulty comes round, and it is no longer possible for him to work his machinery at a profit, he has nothing to do but to shut up his mill, discharge his labourers, and retire to some quiet retreat, far from the sight of poverty, out of reach of the cries of distress. What is it to him though the thousands whom he has collected in one spot should suffer and sicken and die? He has, as the commercial code of obligation runs, discharged to them his full obligation. On the other hand—for employers are not alone to blame—in times of prosperity the labourers and artisans are not satisfied with fair and legitimate wages, such as the article they are engaged on can for any length of time continue to pay. With wages already too high, they will strike for higher payment; and thinking, in the madness induced by un-

exemplified prosperity, that no reverse is ever to come, that to-morrow shall be as to-day, and more prosperous, they squander away in luxuries and vanities the whole of their earnings, part of which, if they had any wisdom, or were capable of learning a lesson from past experience, they should have reserved for the time of reverse and trial which is sure to come. On the one side there is avarice, on the other extravagance, and on the part of both selfishness. Each one considers his own things, not the things of others. There is a thorough rejection of the scriptural principle, that we should do unto others as we would that they should do unto us; and inasmuch as the conduct of all is founded on false and ignoble principles of action, nothing can be expected but those results so often experienced in connection with all the works and labour which man undertakes under the sun, not merely vanity and vexation of spirit, but suffering and misery in its grossest form—hunger and nakedness; and that when the earth teems with its bounteous products, and the stores are loaded with grain, and a thousand warehouses contain more clothing than would cover the nakedness and fend off the cold from a hundred times the number of those whose bitter cries go up to heaven for bread and raiment! O man, O inventor, O machinist, O artisan, all this evil has come

upon your land and cities because you are not upright according to the law of your God, notwithstanding your many inventions !

LESSONS.

And what does this subject teach all who are engaged on the inventions of man—who are either discovering new principles and powers, making new combinations for useful work, or directing their labours ? It teaches them that they are surely to be something more than artisans ; that they are not to become wholly mechanical in their ideas and pursuits ; that they have within themselves living souls, whose harmonious movement is of more importance than all the material mechanism of the world. Their souls, which shall yet be translated to a higher region of life and being, there to evolve their products of moral and spiritual worth or baseness, should surely be their main concern ; for when this earthly scene with all its civilisation shall have passed away, they shall exult in bringing forth glory to God, or mourn in misery and sin. Therefore, my brethren, be not mere artisans ; let not your souls become mere workshops, nor places only of business, nor banks. Use business and invention, but let them not make you their slaves. Let not civilisation be your master, but your servant. Mate-

rial comfort is good, but moral worth is better. The fabrics of the factory, though of the finest texture, are but the products of worms; the colours, though of Tyrian dye, are compounds of earths and metals: but the soul is the breath of God; it is the image of the Almighty, and is itself eternal. Though born of time, its history for ever shall run parallel with the being of Jehovah, ever rising upward or ever sinking downward, taking the colour of all its future fate from the light which shines in it now, or the shadows which darken its windows,—a being renewed on earth, that it may be glorified in heaven, or unsanctified now and lost for ever.

A BRIGHT FUTURE.

Be it with us as it may, the time will surely come, foreseen by the prophet and foretold in his vision, in which, describing the glory of the latter day, he clothes his conception in material imagery, describing the lustful propensities of man, his cruelties and his vices, as beasts of prey—wolves and leopards and lions—predicting of them that they shall yet become tamed down, so that they shall hurt no more: 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and

the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Imagery this, is it not, descriptive of the taming of those destructive principles of our nature by which we are, instead of brothers and friends—members of the same great family of God—turned into enemies, wild beasts of prey living on one another,—capital crunching up the bones of labour, wealth eating up the dry crust of poverty, deceitfulness preparing to spring upon the portion of the orphan and the widow, lust seducing innocence, envy poisoning happiness, and murder imbruing its hands in blood,—all these wild beasts tamed down to innocence, or slain—nothing to hurt or destroy? Oh! in that latter day, whose morning dawn scarcely yet with a few faint rays tinges the horizon of our world, with what wonder and pity shall the inhabitants who shall dwell here, in these the cities of our civilisation, and machinery, and arts, and luxuries—with what wonder and pity shall they peruse the records of this day! We talk of the dark ages which reigned over the Roman Empire under the

barbarous sway of the Goths and Vandals and Huns, who crushed out the effete civilisation of the mighty Rome, when, covered with glory, she sat down and clothed herself in the mantle of indolence at the table of luxury, or stretched herself on the bed of sloth,—a bed that stood on injustice, pillowing her head on every crime. But may not they who live in the latter day, when the sun of righteousness instead of the sun of civilisation shall have attained his meridian splendour, look back on our day as still the age of darkness—only a repetition of the old Roman glory—a time of fearful crime and of terrible retribution, a time of warfare of class against class, a time during which still the wild beasts of sin made their dens among the fastnesses of our civilisation, but yet, thank God, still a time of dawning inquiry after the right and the true and the good,—a time when individual aim made attempts at the introduction of a truer and better state of things, when there were not wanting prophets crying in the wilderness, preaching the doctrine of repentance, nor people who sought to return to the original state of justice and uprightness; but still a time when darkness covered the nations, and thick darkness the people! Then shall those discoveries of which we boast—then shall our printing-presses and telegraphs, and telescopes and photo-

types, sink into comparative insignificance before the superior civilisation which invented, or rather applied, laws which were just ; which, discarding selfishness as the true principle of action, adopted benevolence, and found it to harmonize all that was discordant, and to destroy all that was impure. And this is the latter day of which still the prophet speaks—the prediction of a better state : ‘For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron : I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within all thy borders : but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one shall become a great nation : I the Lord will hasten it in his time.’

XX.

THE DUTY OF YOUTH IN THE PROSPECT OF AGE.

‘Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened; and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low; and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird; and all the daughters of music shall be brought low: also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern: then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.’—ECCLES. xii. 1-7.

THE OLD MAN.

IT is hardly necessary to explain the metaphorical language used by the author of this book to depict the sorrowful decay of the human frame, as it nears its dissolution in those evil days which are coming with rapid pace towards us all; when the sun, moon, and stars shall, for us, lose their radi-

ance; when the cloud of one sorrow shall be seen rising ere the rains of another have been fully expended; when the hands, which by their labour and defence keep the house in plenty and in safety, become feeble and tremulous; when the sturdy supporters of our frame bow themselves beneath their burden; when the teeth can no more perform their laborious function; when the observant faculties can scarce see through the dull film which gathers on the orbs of vision; when the busy mill fails for the wanting supply of the water of life; when the bird of the morning calls up the wakeful old man who cannot rest; when the voice which made the melodious music of speech is poor and thin; when the head becomes white as the blossoms of the almond-tree; and the care that is small as the grasshopper is a burden to be cast off, and when there is nothing further to be sought, since desire itself has ceased; and when the weak, weary old man is about to take his departure beneath the hearse's nodding plumes, accompanied by the pall-bearers and the mourners, the silver cord that bound the mortal to the immortal having been loosed, and the golden bowl having been broken, which held the nourishment of life, and the pitcher which supplied it. This metaphorical language is easily understood. Before this picture even child-

hood may well stand in awe, and, while contemplating it, may find its little heart awed and hushed, and led to reflect on a present duty in view of such a sad prospect. We feel, when viewing it, as though we would not wish to live too long, and that there were more wisdom and reason in that saying of the ancients than we had thought of: 'Whom the gods love, die young.' Should we pass the threescore and ten or fourscore years usually allotted man, we will understand the Psalmist when he says, 'Their strength is labour and sorrow.' If long life be a blessing, it is at least one out of which the honey has been sucked. It is a withered rose, whose faded leaves death comes kindly to scatter. It is a poor, ruinous, storm-beaten house, which we would gladly see taken down, that the sad old tenant may go to the better house prepared for the dead. If indeed there were no other house to which the soul might repair, we might sorrow over the wreck of the mud cabin sinking to poverty and decay; but as there are wide and broad fields in the great continent of heaven, where there are plenty and riches, let not the soul fear the ocean passage of death that separates him from the city and habitations of the blessed in the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

THE FUTURE STATE.

But that is just the point and question which need investigation. Is there indeed a home for us when we have left our earthly house, or is it a better one than even the ruinous one in which old age dwells? It is hardly the place here to enter on any investigation of the grounds of our belief in the immortality of the soul. We shall take the general opinion, the consent of mankind—with the exception of a few philosophers who want demonstration that they may have faith—as sufficient proof to us that there is an after-world, where there shall be a place for justice and judgment. But admitting that there is this future state, the question may well give us uneasiness: What shall be our condition in it? Shall we be better or worse? We do not think this is an unresolvable problem, but rather one the answer to which may be found by each of us. It is one, however, which we should ask and answer at an early date; for it is not when the old man's arm is feeble, and his legs fail, and his conceptions are dull, and all things are a weariness, that the question can be seen in all its bearings. It will require all the faculties to discuss it; and then, after it has been discussed, there will still, it may be, be time and labour required for the pre-

paration that may be necessary to render our after-life in the spirit-world enjoyable and happy; and this is the purport of the wise man's observation: 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.'

REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR.

There is more implied in remembering our Creator than the words appear to contain. The mere recognition of God, of His existence, and His relation to us as a Creator, will not comprehend all the meaning, which is of vaster sweep.

Perhaps the *constancy* of this thought of Him as our Creator and God, and the allowing of this thought to dominate over all others, bringing them into obedience to its requirements, will go far to exhaust its signification. It is not a mere passing reminiscence, an entertainment of the idea for a moment during periods devoted to religious service, but such a memory of Him as shall never leave our minds without the power of a present God. If we go through life with this thought always present, never wholly asleep, we shall lead a truly religious life, and we shall not stray far in the ways of vice and iniquity.

Our Creator! What a word that is! We do not wonder at atheists or pantheists. They have their difficulties, but so has creation. We have looked at every side of this question about the origin of things, and have concluded that it is much more consonant with reason to believe that the world owes its being to an intelligent God, than that it is self-existent and eternal. What boots it to bring up the reasons here? We could not furnish a *demonstration* which might not be found in some link defective. The atheist might start puzzles which we could not solve. We, too, could show how untenable is *his* position. What then? We *believe* in God; we do not propose to *prove* His existence. The Scriptures assume it, conscience asserts it, humanity affirms it. He is over all. There is no better word than this: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

Without making any inquiry as to the mode of creation, we shall view ourselves and surroundings as of the production of God. He made us, and, it is superfluous to add, not we ourselves. Let it be that He has produced all *by laws*, He has not less produced it. We admire all the more the regularity of the work. Gravitation is universal, but it does not do away with the need of God. The sun warms all, and the rains descend on all, but it is

not the less God who is light and warmth and life. Let us suppose some one to deny that there was any maker of a machine because it turned out an immense variety of work, which had yet a common likeness, with the utmost regularity! It is the triumph of art to extend the area of its application. If one thread might be spun by chance, yet who could believe this of the web? and who can look on the web of being, and refuse to believe that a God of infinite skill works the loom? We believe in God and providence, because all things are amenable to strict law.

And so we know that God has made us, and that He guides us, although we have not heard His voice or seen His shape. We know that under this drapery of nature is the divine form, inscrutable by mortal vision. We know that this world was built by the great Architect in that deep shadowy past into which we gaze with longing eye, and yet see but the chaos, the wild disorders, and then the uprising forms of things, and the comely order of the plants and trees and animals, and the first of our race, coming forth from the unseen plastic hand of the great Artificer. Our great Creator is thus hidden and revealed at the same time,—hidden from the eye of sense, but revealed to the mental vision; without form or similitude, as in the day that He

spoke to Israel in Horeb, and yet well known as the *guiding, living* God, who brought them up out of Egypt, that they might have rest.

GOD LOST IN HIS CREATION.

But we are in danger of losing the idea of God as OUR Creator in this vast world-creation. The same feeling oppresses us that oppressed the Psalmist when he looked to the heaven, the sun, and the moon, and the stars. Possibly the thought of the Psalmist was, How good and how gracious is that God who has ordained all this glorious firmament, with its shining lights, for such an insignificant being as man! But our view is now necessarily different. We look upon these orbs as fulfilling only a very secondary object in their uses to man. We look upon this world but as one of the other planets which may contain creatures as varied as our own, and the thought that oppresses us is, How can God be supposed to take any notice of such an insignificant speck in the universe as our little world—how can He care for the creature which He has formed on it as its ruler? This feeling requires to be neutralized by the idea, that though the universe is vast, yet it is presided over by an infinite Being. He sees all at once. He cannot, like us, become weary with the survey of the items of know-

ledge. Every individual is open before Him. No one, on account of insignificance, is beyond His view or His care. The laws which are His ways apply to each. No one thing is unrelated to Him, or He to it; and as He is Creator of all, no one to whom He has given intelligence should, though he has natural liberty, forget that relationship. The orbs are held in obedience to Him by the law of gravitation, but souls are held in their course by their intelligence and heart. Those cannot be withdrawn from the operation of the law of force; these should never be withdrawn from Him by neglect of duty. Let love and piety guard and guide the heart, as these are guided to circle in their orbits. This is a law for men of all periods of life,—for youth, for age, in life and in death.

YOUTH THE TIME FOR RELIGION.

The principal thought of the passage is, that youth is the time for religion, both as to the learning of it as a theory, and the practice of it as a life. Do not wait to consider what are the views of God and duty you should take till old age comes, and do not omit to live in accordance with those views during the fresh youth of being, as though religion were only for age and feebleness. If you duly consider what religion is, and what it requires, you

will never put it off till life begins to fail, and the brain begins to grow feeble, and all the faculties are impaired.

Now this is just what young people mostly do. They think that religion is very well for children and for old people. They were very fond of the Sabbath school when they were little, but they gave that up when they went to their business or their trade. The main thing, perhaps, which induced them to do that was, that they were greatly confined all the week, and they needed a rest, or some country exercise and air. They gave up, for similar reasons, attendance on religious worship. Then, too, they gave up devotional exercises, and all their thoughts went after the world and pleasure. They think, too, that they shall revert to religion when they get old. It may be useful, and may do them good then; but as for the present, they want to see life, and enjoy it a little.

And we cannot but here revert to a fact which truly seems strange,—that old persons who have no religion of their own, should be anxious that their children should be religious. They do not go to church,—as if they had done quite enough of that in their day,—but they are always urging their families to go, which of course they do not.

The amount of it is, we are able to see the use-

fulness and propriety of religion for every time of life but that one which we are now passing through. We see that religion is a good, useful, excellent thing, but it may be dispensed with for a while, and can be got at any time, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves about it now. Indeed at present it would be burdensome, and might prevent our success in life—taking up our time, and using some of our means, and giving us infinite trouble with its forms. Still, remember, it seems to be generally admitted that it is a highly useful, appropriate thing to some other time of life than that through which we are now passing.

THE USE OF FORMAL RELIGION.

There are some, indeed, who have got to think that religion in all its forms is useless, and have rejected it once and for ever. They have perhaps come to the conclusion that we cannot know God, and that we cannot know what those forms of religion are which are suitable to His worship, or what are those duties of morality which spring from our relation to the Eternal. These surely have gone too far. It may be admitted that they have a right to doubt or deny that the views of God which are entertained by this or that sect are correct, and also to protest against the forms of religion which are

in vogue, but they cannot, unless they are utter atheists, affirm that we have no relations to God imposing upon us certain duties of religion and morals. It cannot be esteemed a matter of no importance whether we live in accordance with these relations. There are certain means given us of knowing God, and of finding out the relations in which we stand to Him; and so we are responsible for the right and due performance of those duties, whatever they may be.

WITHOUT EXCUSE.

Nor will we be excused from having the right knowledge of God, and of the relations in which we stand to Him, because of the difficulty there is in coming to a true knowledge of Him, unless we can show that we have done what we could to know God, and our duty in regard to Him. The apostle, in writing to the Romans, says that the heathen were without excuse, inasmuch as that which might be known of God was manifest to them, and charges them with not liking to retain God in their knowledge, and so with being given over to all kinds of immorality. Had they preserved their knowledge of God, they would have been so guided as that they would not have fallen into the excesses to which they became subject, and so would by virtue have preserved their

strength, and would have remained the possessors of the world.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the knowledge of God is not to be arrived at so very easily as that we may put off its acquisition till some time when we may have leisure, and nothing else to trouble us. There is, it must be confessed, a difficulty in acquiring the knowledge of God, otherwise there would not be so many opinions about what that knowledge is. Theology would not be so various, sects would not be so numerous, and religious rancour would not be so bitter. We do not quarrel over a proposition in Euclid, but we do over the attributes of God. These are by no means fixed—at least some of them. We do not think that is any reason why we should give up the search after the truth of them; it is rather a reason why we should commence the search after God early. If we have a long journey, and are in danger of missing our way at false turnings, we had need to be up in the morning. It is not when the evening shadows begin to close, that we shall succeed in our journey.

COMING TO GOD A PRESENT DUTY.

But besides the difficulty of coming to the true knowledge of God, the full knowledge of Him, we should remember that our duty towards Him, in

His relation to us as Creator, is a present duty, and a constant duty. It cannot for a moment be supposed that that duty can be deferred till just before death. What! Does God require nothing of us when we are young and strong? Is gratitude for pleasures enjoyed to be postponed till it is dulled by the sorrows of age? Must health and strength be given as an offering to the world, and weakness and sickness devoted to Jehovah? It is surely not thus that we would act when we meditate on doing justice. The truth is, every one who has spent his life in opposition to God, or at least has lived as though God were not, must feel that, on coming to the last of his days, he would be acting a very mean part to attempt to put God off with the broken-down service of the evening of life. It is like idling all day, and just before sunset doing a bit of work in a make-believe way, and then coming to our employer for a full day's wages. Of course it is best to repent and go to work, even though late in the day; and God has held out strong hopes, especially to those whom He has called at the eleventh hour, that He will not turn them away; but it is a very false hope for us to think that, if we deliberately refuse to hear His call, we shall yet at last do so in time to save our distance,—to save our miserable life and soul, and win the reward of

discipleship, although we have hardly commenced the alphabet of the true knowledge of God our Saviour.

OLD AGE BEGINNING RELIGION.

It has been sometimes supposed that the time of old age is better for coming to just thoughts about God and religion generally, than the time of youth. I think this is a grand mistake. I grant you that an old man who has all his life meditated on God, and the duties which we owe to Him, will be very wise towards the decline of life. We shall get wisdom from him, if from any one ; that is, provided his faculties have not failed him. There are, however, many instances of the failure of those faculties. We think the spirit and temper manifested by David on many occasions were far superior to that shown by him when about to leave the world. But whatever we may think of such a case, and of the wisdom of the man who has maintained a life of piety and goodness from youth to old age, we can only say that we do not expect much wisdom from the old man who has been a fool during the great part of his former life. We do not make much of death-bed conversions, as evidences of the truth of the system to which the conversion is made. It is not the time to come to just conclusions when the faculties

are clouded with disease, or the mind is distracted by pain. The soul has enough to do to attend then to the surrounding sorrows. It is, we should think, ready to assent to any proposition. It depends on who is the priest or minister what is the kind of conversion. The poor man is glad then to find a counsellor and a comforter. Fear unmans him. A large number around are anxious that he should become a convert to the faith, that he should give the right sign and speak the true word; and, as a general rule, he does what is wanted. He just gives the sign which is required. What should he do? What can he do? And what is the value of what he does do? Not much. We refuse to accept the suffrages of others in any case, much more in this one. Ten thousand such testimonies are of no value. It is worth somewhat to have the testimony of a clear, unclouded mind, uninfluenced by terror, or by pain, or by the company around. We give it respect. Even it should not be permitted to override reason; but how much less should we be influenced by the opinions of those who have formed their opinion, if they have such a thing, amid such disadvantageous circumstances? No; if any one has an ambition to have and leave a testimony worthy of attention by the living, he must begin in youth, and he must give the force of his mind while yet strong to the

consideration of all those questions springing out of our relationship to God. We would not, indeed, wish it to be understood that young persons are likely to have formed, while young, true and reliable opinions. There is nothing more offensive than the dogmatism of young people. It requires a long series of years and studies and changes to make a person's opinion worthy of serious consideration. That man alone who has commenced early in life to consider religion, who has made it his practice as well as his study, is worthy to be consulted by us. I have often thought of the wisdom which is to be found in the delay of Jesus to take upon Himself the office of the ministry till He was over thirty years old. It might perhaps not be too much to ask that those who are to be the instructors of others should wait a like time, that their opinions may have had some time to form, and that they may have taken those various views of the great questions of theology which are necessary to the full knowledge of God, His character and ways.

RIGHT RELATIONS WITH GOD.

Oh! who could for a moment think of remaining out of right relations with God? One would not like to live in a state of forgetfulness of his father, and of consequent misapprehension of his wishes. Some,

indeed, do so, and make up their minds to live apart from those whom they ought to love and cherish. It is a sad thing, however, to become hardened into and by neglect. If we stand in the necessary relation to God of creatures and Creator, and yet care nothing for Him, what a sad condition! If we think that He cares nothing for us—never did—but just created us as toys of skill, sending us forth in sport, like bubbles blown by boys, it is sad. If we think that He did care something for us once, but that by our heartlessness He does so no longer, and that now we may, for all He cares, sport ourselves, or sicken and die, it is sadder still. And if we think of Him as grieved at heart for His children in their waywardness and their wandering, anxious to hear of our return to Him, and yet that we do not think of coming in repentance and tears to ask His pardon and restoration to right relationship, it is still more melancholy. This last is surely the case. The Scriptures represent Him as waiting to be gracious, as pardoning and receiving with overflowing love and tenderness; and our own hearts indorse the representation. Standing in presence of Nature, which proposes to us with her changing face, now solemn and grave, and then smiling, the enigmas of death and life, beckoning us with her attractive finger to explore the great mysteries of

love and hatred, and hope and disappointment, we may sometimes feel puzzled about God, and whether He thinks of us, and whether He has any want of our love, or any care for our neglect, or any sorrow for our pains, or any desire for our repentance. We see unchangeable law ruling all with iron hands—the storm deaf to the voice of prayer, the waters quenching the light of saintly eyes turned to God for succour, and the glare of unbelief or defiance that scorns to ask for aid from the sweet heavens. We see the lightning bolt pass the murderer by and strike the head of innocence; nay, we see the hand of the wicked destroying the peace and hope and life of the good. We see this, and are ready to ask, What boots it in what relation I stand to the author of this grim destiny, that seems to make no distinction? In the language of the wise man, ‘All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the evil; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner: and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.’ Such is the view which our eye of sense beholds—the iron rule of a law which knows no moral distinctions save those of strength and prudence and skill, that especially hears no prayer, and is entirely devoid of respect for religion. But with

this voice there is another sound which the soul hears, which says—and God forbid that we should be deaf to it—‘Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.’

THE OBJECT OF LIFE.

What is the object of life? Is it to eat, and drink, and sleep? Then God need not have put into us souls of that high faculty with which He has endowed us. He might have left out that faculty by which we inquire after the infinite, as calculated only to mar a sentient happiness. He should not have annoyed us by setting us to seek and feel after Him that we might find Him, if he intended that we never should find Him. If we are never to give an account to Him of our ways, or to render up souls well formed, why did He mar our pleasures by putting within us a conscience which lies to us, telling us we are accountable when we are not, and that He wants us to be good and holy and reverent, when He cares nothing about what we are? It was not only a waste of faculty, but it was a deception and a cheat. No, we were not to be mere butter-

flies, nor bees, nor beavers. The object of life is higher. We hear much and see much of self-made men, by which is meant men who have made a fortune. Why, if you had made millions, you would have gone but a little way in making yourself a man. You may be one of the poorest, most miserable specimens of humanity. The millionaire may have lost his soul, lost his conscience, lost his piety, lost his God. It were better if we heard of a God-made, a Christ-made, a Holy-Spirit-made man. All this talk of self-made men is the twaddle of a sensual, mammon-loving, material world. The man who is self-made is a silver or gold image set up for men to worship, but without the breath of the life of God. The man who is God-made is of nobler form and mien. God never intended that you should become dummies on which to display the draperies of wealth. He has said to you and to me, Behold me, become like unto me. He displays Himself in creation, and in providence, and in revelation, and in His incarnate Son, and He says, This is what you are intended to become. You need to eat, and to drink, and to be clothed, but in order that you may be wise, and just, and beneficent, and patient, and loving, and faithful. Do not spend all your time in the accumulation of the means; look to and secure the end of all. That end is not accumulation or

pleasure ; it is a well-formed, divine soul—self-made, but also duty-made, religion-made, Christ-made, God-made. Anything less than this is a lost soul.

Perhaps some of those who are conscious that they have almost lost their soul, may, even when the grasshopper has become a burthen, be induced to set out to seek its life. They have let its life nearly slip, but still God may direct them to search for it, that they may nurture it into a divine life. It may not have yet lost its vitality, and may respond to the earnest inquirer: ‘ You have done much to kill me, but I am not yet dead. I am here yet, but choked and oppressed by the sensualities and worldliness of life.’ Oh take and cherish this soul of yours, my brother ! Do not let it die for want of that divine nourishment which it can alone have in piety and virtue.

And you who are just setting out in life, do not let that soul of yours be fed on the husks which only the swine of humanity eat. There is bread enough in your Father’s house. There will be joy on your return. Do not live in licentiousness, do not live for wealth ; do not remain away from your heavenly Father. Let the thought of Him come back to you. He loves you, He will bless you, He will rejoice over you. Heaven will sing over you, and you shall become what your Creator designed you to be,—wise, good, happy, and immortal.

SYSTEMS AND SECTS.

But, it may be asked, in what way are we to become thus God-like? You say, 'I do not like the systems and the sects.' Well, they are not all that could be wished. We might say the same of the arts and of agriculture. There are many false practices in these, but yet they are the best that have yet been discovered. By them we get along, however, tolerably well. We are clothed and fed by them. The church will furnish you with such means as may nourish the soul, and clothe the divine that feels itself perishing. Many of our church processes have but poor results, but there is One who is to be found in the church, who says, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.' Come unto me, all ye poor souls, and be saved. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' 'If any man love me, we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' If the church and means of grace bring a man into the presence of this Divine One, he shall have a resolution of all his doubts and difficulties about God, and in Him

who was sent from heaven shall see that Father who yearns after every one, and will receive him with joy which has this unanswerable apology: 'It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.'

Listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom in this call to religion. The evil days have not as yet come to many. But they are coming, and cannot be delayed.

Our boat floats down the river
Up which no life may sail,
Onward the course for ever,
Through the calm and through the gale.

In companies we're sailing
Over the river of time;
One goes amid our wailing,
While we sail through the prime.

There are rocks and rapids nearing
Which we may pass or sink,
A questioning and fearing—
By the middle or the brink?

See, the crafts are getting very few,
And all are growing frail,
Where hundreds were, but one or two,
Leaking—as they sail.

The storm is up on the crested sea;
We go beneath the wave,
If He who ruled on Galilee
Stretch not His hand to save.

Ever over the surging waves
The Christian's sails are driven,
The frail boats sink 'neath the darksome wave—
The mariner is in heaven!

XXI.

THE JUDGMENT OF PLEASURE.

'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.'—ECCLES. xi. 9, 10.

MADE FOR ENJOYMENT.

THE wise man advises us to get as much joy as we can out of life—to extract joy from the table, joy from the cup, joy from the dress, joy from all pleasant odours, joy from our relations in life, joy from our work. He would have us open our eye to all beauty, and refuse no gratification which is calculated to make ourselves and others happy. We imagine he here gives us God's own views. No doubt He who, in making all things, covered them with draperies of beauty, and put into them such exquisite sweetness, intended that we should not withhold our admiration from the one, nor our lips from the other. We know of no greater punishment than that of condemnation to a cell beneath the floors of paradise. To think that we almost can

smell the odours of the garden of life through the dank, dripping mould, and never taste of its fruits ! And yet this is what some have voluntarily condemned themselves to, under the impression that it would be a self-denial grateful to the God who gave the earth to man, saying, ' Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . . Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat.' And if, in the general deed of gift, God reserved one tree, of which our race was not to eat, yet surely it was for no arbitrary reason, but for some poisonous quality—death-bearing in its effect—that He warned these two young and inexperienced children to refrain from eating thereof. Nor is there any other bound set, even yet, to our enjoyments. Detriment and death may come to us from eating of this or that tree whose fruit seems good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise ; and then, no doubt, the just and benevolent command is, ' Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'

ASCETICISM NOT RELIGION.

We find, therefore, no reason, and as little religion, in asceticism. To forbid enjoyment, argues

neither a sound mind nor a feeling heart. Those who do so, cannot do better than retire to the woods and become anchorites. Let them not claim, however, our approbation or our worship. Simon Styletes may stand on the top of his pillar as many years as he will, but we should be sorry to stop the crowd from laughing at him. Some good mocking might send him to useful work. Useless voluntary suffering we consider a bad way to saintship. It may procure a place—as what ridiculous foolery has not?—in the Pope's calendar. God loves the cross when it takes away the sorrows and sins of the world. There is no virtue in it when only for exhibition, or to attract wonder. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and attending marriages. John the Baptist, no doubt, enjoyed with zest his locusts and wild honey. It is necessary sometimes to be content with very plain fare; and he who cannot be happy with coarse food and clothing, when circumstances require it, has somewhat to learn. In the court of Herod, probably, John wore soft clothing. Necessity may suffer what convenience would reject. In the desert we will wear coarse clothes; in the palace we will not refuse court dress. There is no merit in rags, if we can honestly have fine linen and good broadcloth. Above all, let us make the best of circumstances. We may extract joy from

very poor material. The water of life is as good from an earthen pitcher as from a golden goblet. Let us not cry if we have not silver spoons. Happiness comes unbidden to the contented mind. There are flowers in the forest and the field as well as in the walled garden. Let us not be too chary in our approbation of pleasures on which we tread. Let us not scorn those which are cheap, nor treat as sour grapes those which are beyond our mark. If providence invites us to rare dainties, let us not do despite to our entertainer by despising his offerings. It is not for us to say to God, 'Thy gifts be to Thyself, and Thy rewards to another,' any more than to complain of Him should He see meet to give us only poorer fare. Let us enjoy, and let us be content. Our Divine Father loves to see us happy, loves also to see how we can be patient.

There are wise and prudent persons who would shun the sweet enjoyments of life, lest they should some time or other be unable to procure them. This is a maxim which may be pushed too far, and, if carried to an extreme, would leave us without enjoyments at all. There is more sense in the wise man's reasoning, when he tells us, 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other.' The very fact that the time may come when we

cannot enjoy, is a reason for a present happiness. The economy of the world requires that there be darkness as well as light, sorrow as well as joy, adversity as well as prosperity ; and as each is for a purpose, we ought to see that that purpose be not frustrated—enjoyment with thankfulness, adversity with due meditation on the proper uses. Nor should we strive to marry youth to misery, nor, for that matter, endeavour to make age consort with pastimes that are no longer palatable. It is not meet to put new wine into old bottles, but new wine into new bottles, that both may be preserved.

YOUTH THE TIME FOR ENJOYMENT.

And hence it is that youth is pointed out as the appropriate time for enjoyment. All young creatures are full of vitality, and break forth into play. If there were no other reason for death, it were sufficient that only the young can enjoy. When the limbs get stiff, and the blood flows sluggishly, we must be content with a duller happiness. Probably the remembrances of our youth are the most joyous pleasures of old age. The green fields where we sported have no equals now. Our youthful friendships can have no counterparts among the alliances and partnerships of age. Our holidays then, and sports—how full of enjoyment ! The

young dream of love is better than all later experiences; and so it is better that we should give place to other beings who shall keep God's world full of rejoicings. When men begin to complain, they are long enough here—especially if they have a good hope of another youth, which shall not, like this one, grow old. Beautiful, then, to our eyes, are the sports and pastimes of childhood. Every good man will say, Sing on, play on. It is wicked to make a child sorry save for sin. Some old morose, peevish people have a good deal to answer for. They have wrung young hearts with sorrow, because they made the mistake that God loved sorrow rather than joy. Just the mistake that persecutors have made when they would compel men to adopt a false religion. It is perhaps not too much to say that this putting down of youthful joy has cost as many sorrows as the Inquisition. The area has been wider, and the special cases not so glaring, but the sum of misery has been immense. The benefit has not, we presume to think, been at all proportionate to the loss. Granted that gloom, frowns, chastisements for mere mirth and ebullitions of joy have sometimes made hard workers, men and women who have sought enjoyment in industry and money—was the end sufficient atonement for the means? Hardly, we think. We do not believe in frowns and blows

for anything but what God frowns on and chastises. He does not want us to be unhappy. He does not want us to be prematurely wise or prudent. No doubt He requires us always to be moderate, but that is a rule variable at every period of life. He will have us to avoid all forbidden pleasures, and at the same time to learn such restraints as are necessary to our health and to the comfort of those around us, and altogether to comport ourselves as creatures for whom wisdom utters her voice, saying, 'Come up hither.' As we are neither butterflies nor kids, we must, while allowing our animality to have free play, remember the adornments of the mind and the enjoyments of the soul. We may remember, too, that we are more than bees, which can only teach us to be busy and prudent. Indeed all nature is our teacher, and our lessons are to be learned also from the voice within, calling us at a very early period to conscientiousness in all our doings and dealings; we must set even over all our joys this monitor, whom we should take due care to have well taught by the words of God, that it also may be a good schoolmaster to bring us up for Him, and the glorious after-world which He has created for the comfort and enjoyment of those who have used this life well. In a word, God says to youth, Be happy, but be just; be joyful, but be wise; let

mirth flow freely, but let piety be a course to confine its waters.

FAST LIFE.

Probably the passage we are dwelling on is the one which of all others would be quoted by fast men and women in justification of the course of life they think it appropriate to pursue—especially the first clause of the 9th verse of the 11th chapter: ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.’ It will be well, however, to take this in connection with what follows: ‘For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.’ No greater sin against truth can be committed than that of cutting off one of its limbs. We have been amazed sometimes to hear our own words quoted, but without their modifying and restraining clauses. Give God’s truth justice, and do not send it abroad on only one leg. Let us for a little see this one in its full and fair proportions.

JOYFUL, BUT ACCOUNTABLE.

The amount is be joyful; but remember you are accountable, and that as you sow, so you shall reap. The lesson is not ironical, as some well-intentioned but unwise interpreters have made it. It is not,

'Go on now in your pleasures, but I will make you pay up for all this.' We have sometimes known masters allow their pupils to 'carry on' for a time, that there might be the better show of reason for a good punishment. This may be proper enough when the course indulged in is vicious; and it has its counterpart in the ways of God, who allowed the cup of the Amorites to fill to the brim before they were cast out. But the permission and the precept here are not regarding crime, but regarding enjoyment, which only becomes crime when it is extravagant or hurtful to others or ourselves. Be joyful, eat and drink, have pleasure in all just ways: this is right. But as there is always a tendency towards extravagance and intemperance and injustice in every passion and appetite, all these are to be so restrained that we shall be able to give a report of the same to our heavenly Father. We must so comport ourselves at the table, in the festive gathering, in the family, at picnics and parties, in all our relations, however joyous and hilarious, as that, if summoned by Him to give an account of the same, He would say on hearing it, 'My child, you have done well.'

MICROSCOPIC MORALITY.

It may well be that we should not think of God as very observant of minute particulars of our action.

We think that He will rather take broad views of our conduct. We do not think the highest respect is gained for God when we represent Him to ourselves as scrutinizing an honest life for some small defalcation. What God wants, we think, especially is conscientiousness—the earnest wish to do what is right and true. It is the heart He requires, rather than some formal exhibition of either piety or virtue. We do not know that faultless, extremely proper children are to be very much admired, but conscientious and loving children always are. Let the heart be right, though the life should be a little eccentric in either child or man, and there will be no great harm done. But when the heart is right, the foot will not stray. Delight in the law of God, on which the good man meditates, will restrain the step from the way of fools. It will be a rudder to direct the prow of life in sailing the sea of duty, so that we shall not get stranded nor wrecked on the headlands of vice. A supreme love to God and to His law will act as compass and helm. As Augustine has said, ‘Love God, and then do what you will.’ But let not this sentence be eviscerated of its true meaning, as though it were intended to transmute any vice into a virtue. ‘He that abides in God,’ says John, ‘sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him; whosoever

is born of God (into the divine life of love) doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' You may sow your poor perishable seeds of precept, and rule, and prudential reason, and example, and they may send up some ephemeral plants; but the love of God is that divine seed which springs up, for every man making the life beautiful, in winter and summer, in prosperity and adversity, in temptation and in trial, as well as when the dew falls or the sun shines. Love God, and do what you please; for then you will always please to do what God loves. You will then be partners with God, and in full communion and fellowship with the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ. Do you think that he who goes through life in the society of God, will need to fear the sight of His countenance in the day when He shall judge the secrets of all hearts by the gospel of his Son? No! For as John says, 'Now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.'

THE JUDGMENT.

But when Solomon taught the people wisdom, these views were at least far from being clearly understood. He had, however, a hold of the great

fact, that a time for judgment must be found somewhere in the universe of God. His admonitions are founded on this fact: 'For all these things God will bring thee into judgment,'—if not *here*, yet surely *hereafter*. Fear of judgment, then, should restrain, if no higher or nobler principle. It requires to be urged yet upon those who know no higher principle of life. Probably, too, those judgments which are likely to come upon men in this life for extravagance and folly, are after all the most powerful reins for the conduct of the passions. The great white throne seems too distant and cloud-covered for most sensual vision. These views the 'fast men,' the '*bons vivants*,' leave to the seers and to the saints. They are deaf to the voices of heaven, but they can hardly close their ears against the voices of earth. If they will not hear Moses, they may listen to Combe. If they are deaf to the cry of the prophets, perhaps they will yet listen to the deductions of the philosophers. John may be too divine and transcendental, but the physiologists and doctors are so practical that they may even be persuaded to listen to them, at least when they have got a few lessons from experience. These all tell us that the throne of judgment is already erected, and the judge already sitting, and that there is judgment on all extravagance and excess

of pleasure. The penalties of this daily sitting court are very various. Sometimes a man gets off by paying a heavy fine, sometimes to the full amount of all he is worth. It is worth our pains to calculate how much 'a spree' costs. A poor man cannot afford to look with supreme indifference on this penalty, especially if he has a wife and children to support. Think of this: your debauch may cause your dear ones a famine of bread. If your wild life be indulged in, your property will soon be gone. It is one of the penalties of the judgment which is set at present in the unseen heaven, and there will be 'nothing in his hand' as he goes forth from the judgment. And there is the penalty of sickness, of every amount, from the headache to delirium tremens, from the flush of incipient fever to 'bones full of the sins of youth.' What a train of ills scatter themselves through the ranks of sensuality, to torment the votaries of lust! Though many diseases are hereditary, and some the result of circumstances of character and locality, yet others may be directly traced to crime. It is no popular error that traces tabes and gout and madness to the excesses of gratification. Then, too, there are judgments that come over men's souls by their sensualities. Mind becomes weak, the wing of fancy becomes feeble, the moral nature becomes

imbruted ; the animal becomes strong, and the spiritual weak. We hold this to be the more terrible end. To become incapable of true moral judgments, seems worse than blindness to natural vision. It is the most awful curse that we have any knowledge of, which the prophet represents as the judgment of God : ' Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed ; . . . until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.' Viewing this as a natural consequence of that provision which is established for the punishment of the sensual, we cannot find any cause of complaint against the ways of Providence. It is so, whether we will or not, that those who give themselves to self-indulgence become morally and spiritually degraded—bestial—no longer capable of the arts and duties of life. This is the lesson of all history. By emasculative pleasures Nineveh and Babylon have become ruinous heaps and pools for the bittern. Athens died of effeminate pleasures, which also gave over the conquerors of the world an easy prey to the barbarians. It is said these cities and nations fell before the superior strength and prowess

of their enemies. True; but this removes the difficulty only a step; for the question rises, What makes a people strong and wise and valiant? Is it not the restraint of self-indulgence? It was the temperance of the Spartans that for many years made an insignificant city the mistress of Greece. The Greeks were great while they were temperate. While the Romans ruled their passions, they governed the world. The slavery of the passions has been the precursor of the slavery of the persons. And all this is God's way of bringing men to judgment in this life. It is His rule, that those who are not strong shall give place to the strong; and the moral justification of this procedure lies here, that virtue alone can make strong. I speak not here of that strength of mind derived from the consciousness of right, but of that strength which arises from the government of the passions. It is in this direction that we who are now the ruling race on the globe must seek permanence. You may get ironclads on every sea and lake, fortresses at every harbour; you may perfect your cannon and your rifles—and all these are useful for a defence; but all will be unavailing, if once the native strength of our people become wasted with over-indulgence and emasculative pleasures. The permanency of the English constitution depends on

the healthy constitutions of Englishmen. God will bring us into judgment as He has others, and nothing will avail to preserve us as a people but the virtues of endurance, and resistance to effeminate pleasures, by which we have risen to the first rank among the peoples of modern days. You may, if you will trace this subject a little further back, say they are strong, these men, because they are obedient to the curb and chain of prudence and virtue, and they are prudent and virtuous because they respect and obey the law of their God, known to them through the word of His revelation and the procedure of His providence. All strength, then, though the daughter of self-denial, is the grand-daughter of virtue, and finally is found having as its not remote, though often unacknowledged, ancestor, 'the word of God,' that 'sword of the Spirit' by which even in the long run earthly dynasties are established and defended.

PLEASURES SHOULD BE DOMESTIC.

One thing we should not fail to observe, that Solomon will have us to enjoy domestic pleasures. The enjoyments are to be those of home: 'Live joyfully with the wife of thy youth.' Too often men seek their pleasures abroad. They visit the tavern for enjoyment. They congregate in mascu-

line groups, where the refinements of female society are not felt, and so become coarse and dissipated; or, worse still, are found in the society of those women who have forfeited their title to respect, and have become more degraded than the worst of men. God instituted marriage and the family; and when we leave His rule, and go to make institutions contrary to the general well-being of society and the law of God, we shall come to grief. There can be no true happiness which is contrary to His appointments. Solitariness is detrimental to man, and so is that dissipation of the heart and affections which ranges in the domains of licentiousness.

WINE.

Nor should we omit what he here says on the subject of wine. We have not been able to affirm that the man necessarily sins who drinks of the exhilarating beverage. But we hold that it is his right to abstain, and that the circumstances of a community may be such that it becomes his duty. Every man must feel that, if he is in danger of becoming a sot or a drunkard, he should deny himself the enjoyment which he cannot use in moderation; and every man who is actuated by Christian principle must feel that he would be doing a good and

noble act in abstaining, if his abstinence will enable a weak brother to resist the temptation. There can be no doubt about the possibility of such help being given. Association in any practice makes the individuals strong. Example is potent. We may often fail to recover or restrain a foolish brother, but in many cases we may succeed. The circumstances of our times require us to make the trial. If we had a vinous country, if our other maddening drinks were expelled, there might be no need of such association. We might drink our wine with a merry heart. Seldom, according to the testimony of travellers, is drunkenness visible in countries where wine is a common beverage ; but here, where strong drinks are so plentiful and so potent, it is far otherwise. Thousands of our youth are being plunged by them into the depths of degradation ; and the death of the drunkard is often looked upon by broken-hearted fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters, and wives, and children, as the happiest consummation that can befall. In these circumstances it is the duty of every wise and benevolent man to aid, to the best of his ability, in rooting out this terrible vice, which certainly is one of the great curses of our race and country. There is a terrible judgment on all who tarry long at the cup till wine inflame them, and

that are skilful to mix strong drink; and there is a judgment, too, in which we shall all have to give an account of what we have done in staying the progress and allaying the evil of this monster iniquity.

ENJOY YOUR OWN.

Need I say further, that our enjoyments and pleasures should be furnished from our own means? We should buy the garments with which we are decked, and the ointments and perfumes of our toilet, from our own means. There is no prohibition against beautiful dress, or a luxurious table that is procured by legitimate means. Luxury is the parent as well as the daughter of labour. To lay an embargo on luxury, where it can be honestly afforded, would be to deprive the labourer and artisan of bread. We should bless God for a moderate share of vanity. It sets the loom to work, and makes the needle ply. The pearl-gatherer, and the diamond-cutter, and the jeweller, and the silk weaver make their living by the displays of ornament and artistic elegance. It was not vainly that God acted when He placed in the human breast the strong desire for the beautiful. Vanity, as we call it, becomes vice only in extravagance or by injustice. It becomes vice when its gratification cannot be afforded, when

it preys on the wealth and labour of others, when it cheats and swindles and steals; but it is a virtue while it spends, in increasing the beauty and loveliness of the person, the wealth which, scattered, becomes the means of subsistence of the honest industrious poor.

We have thus given to us pleasures as the result and reward of the labours which we have undertaken under the sun, but pleasures for the right use of which we are accountable to God,—in the right use of which we may be tolerably happy here, and approved of by our Judge hereafter; for though we have made much of the evil consequences which flow from all intemperance in the use of the passions and appetites in this life, we are not to forget that there is another judgment, a time and a place for the execution of judgment and justice. The cup of reward is here tasted, not drained. Perhaps it may be bitter on the surface, and sweet in the bottom. Perhaps it may be sweet to the present taste, and bitter to the immortal experience. That is a terrible word coming from the answer of the tender Saviour: 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' Tiberius may revel in the luxurious retreats of Capreae while martyrs contend with wild beasts;

but there is surely a time that will rectify this! Those men who have died that truth might live, who were wretched that the race might be happy, cannot surely have sunk beneath the load of their great miseries into non-existence. Those who converted the world into a hell for their fellows while they sucked the honeycomb of existence, can hardly have passed into the gate of everlasting peace. No! for all these things—the justice and measure of their enjoyments—they will yet be brought into judgment. We are not ignorant of all that may be said of virtue and vice being their own reward, and of the superior happiness which even here the just man has over the unjust, and yet there is from the depths of our humanity a cry like that which John heard from the souls of them which were slain: ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ The judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened, and all history shall have a grand review, and every one shall receive according to his works. ‘Rejoice,’ therefore, ‘O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.’

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